

IMPACT OF EMPIRE · VOLUME 20

EAST AND WEST IN LATE ANTIQUITY

*Invasion, Settlement, Ethnogenesis
and Conflicts of Religion*

Wolf Liebeschuetz

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East and West in Late Antiquity

Impact of Empire

ROMAN EMPIRE, C. 200 B.C.—A.D. 476

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Conflicts of Religion*

By

Wolf Liebeschuetz



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Introduction

1 The Author

I was born on June 22, 1927 on the third floor of my maternal grandmother's house in Hamburg, Rabenstrasse 21. The house faced the Dammtor Bahnhof and the Moorweide, an extensive meadow, which up to 1933 was the site of rallies of various political parties, including the Communists and, already by then, the Nazis. My parents were members of the Liberal Jewish community to which our family had belonged for several generations. The family's Jewishness had a considerable influence on my life. It certainly stimulated my interest in Ancient History.

I have been interested in history as long as I can remember, inspired by my mother. She was a doctor and research physiologist,¹ but she had to leave her research institute at the Hamburg University Hospital at Eppendorf on getting married, and was stopped from exercising her *venia legendi* at Hamburg University by the National Socialist government. She therefore had plenty of time to devote to her three children, and particularly to myself, the eldest. She told fairy tales, and drew pictures to illustrate them. One of her favourites was Heinrich Hoffmann's *König Nussknacker und der arme Reinhold* (Nutcracker king and poor Reinhold). She had an extraordinary visual memory, which enabled her to reproduce that book, text and illustration, from memory for her eldest granddaughter nearly thirty years later. Mother regularly told us stories from the Bible: the creation, Joseph and his brothers, Moses and the exodus from Egypt, Saul and David and Jonathan, selected incidents from the Books of Kings, and the heroic story of the Maccabees. In an account of our life under the Nazis that mother wrote she records that she had learnt from her parents that a fighting spirit is the only antidote against the low self-esteem experienced by outsiders, such as the Jews, and that this is what she was nursing in her children. She also related the stories of the Trojan War as well as much more recent history, notably of the "victorious war" of 1870–71 and "the lost war" of 1914–18, in accordance with our patriotic perspective of those days. I seem to remember that Hindenburg, then president of Germany and in some ways the man who let Hitler in, figured quite prominently. Mother also read from a series of books by Elisabeth Averdiek about a Hamburg family in the first half of the

1 List of 25 publications in Silke Kaiser-von Holst, *Rahel und Hans Liebeschütz—Zwei jüdische Wissenschaftler der Hamburger Universität: Ihr Leben unter dem Nationalsozialismus bis 1939 und im Exil in Grossbritannien*, überarbeitete Magisterarbeit, Hamburg, 2000, 141–42.

nineteenth century. I particularly remember an account of the great fire that destroyed much of the old city in 1842. I also heard quite a lot about Napoleon and his campaigns from the memoirs of Louis de Ségur, Napoleon's aide-de-camp. Later, mother read us a lot of plays, mainly historical ones: Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen* (as well as the autobiography of that knight with an iron hand); Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*, his Wallenstein plays, and *Jungfrau von Orleans*; and then Shakespeare, first in German translation and later in English, starting with *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus* and going on to *Henry IV Part I* and *Macbeth*. So history played a prominent role in my early life.

I have not yet mentioned my father, Hans Liebeschütz, who was a historian.² He had received the classical education then provided by German gymnasia at the Gelehrtenschule des Johanneums in Hamburg. When he left school he wanted to become a rabbi and had spent 1913 as a student in Berlin at the Lehranstalt der Wissenschaft des Judentums, a seminar for training Liberal rabbis. He was at the same time registered as a student at Berlin University, where he heard, among others, Ulrich von Wilamowitz and Eduard Meyer. The impression lasted for the rest of his life. When he resumed his studies after war service in France he specialised in Medieval History. But he kept a particular interest in the language and literature, and especially the history, of the Greeks and Romans. Homer and Plato (especially *The Republic*) were his favorite Greek authors. Of Roman authors, he preferred Lucretius to Virgil. In the late 1920s and up to 1933 he taught a combination of German, Latin, History, and Religion (*Kulturkunde*) at the Lichtwarkschule, an experimental progressive school run by the city authorities.³ At the same time he obtained the *venia legendi* to teach Medieval Latin and Medieval Literature at Hamburg University. Of course he lost both jobs when Hitler came to power. After a short interval he began to teach at the Lehranstalt der Wissenschaft des Judentums in Berlin, where he had attended courses before the war. So in term time he was away from home during the week. But he had many books, which I was free to look at and read. It might be worth mentioning that thirty or so years later my children did not read my books. Fathers are not what they used to be! Their power (*potestas*) may be much the same, but their influence (*auctoritas*) has been

2 "Liebeschütz Hans," with list of publications (Silke Kaiser-von Holst) *Biographisches und Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, xxix (2008), 813–21. Liebeschütz, Hans, *Neue Deutsche Biographie* xiv, Berlin 1985, 489ff (W. Liebeschütz). Veit-Brause. "Emigration in England, ein Gespräch mit Wolfgang Liebeschütz und Edgar Feuchtwanger," in O.H. Oexle and H. Lehmann (eds.), *Nationalsozialismus in den Kulturwissenschaften*, Göttingen, 2004, 513–44.

3 Joachim Wendt, *Die Lichtwarkschule in Hamburg 1921–37*, Hamburg, 2000.

much reduced. My father's books included Carl Oppel's *Das alte Wunderland der Pyramiden* (4th ed., 1881) (Wonderland of the Pyramids), a book that he had read as a boy, and that I found fascinating as soon as I was able to read it. Another book I read quite early was James Breasted's *Geschichte Egyptens* (History of Egypt), a German translation of a book originally written in English, and published in 1936. The library also included Georg Dehio's *Geschichte der Deutschen Kunst* (History of German Art). I was fascinated by the architectural illustrations. The volumes are at Nottingham now, and they still show evidence of serious childish misuse. As long as I can remember I have been interested in looking at historical buildings, and was sorry even then that Hamburg had so few of them, and that apart from the destruction caused by the great fire of 1842, the citizens of Hamburg had been quite ruthless with their architectural heritage. Since then, of course, the war has destroyed almost all that was left, except for two beautifully restored Gothic churches.

Soon after Hitler came to power our parents realised that there would be no future for their children in National Socialist Germany. They would have to learn English. So they arranged for us to have regular lessons from Frau Schröder, who was, if I remember rightly, a Quaker and who had spent many years in England. I don't remember how often she came, or how old I was when her visits began, or indeed how she taught us. But by the summer of 1936 I could converse in English and follow English conversation quite easily. That summer we visited mother's brother, uncle Theodore, who had emigrated to England soon after he had lost his job as a result of Hitler's having come to power (*Machtergreifung*), and was now living in Hull. As well as visiting her brother, my mother also wanted to explore the possibility of sending her children to school in England.

I started school at Easter 1934, when I was almost seven. I attended the local primary school (*Volkschule*). There were between fifty and sixty children in the class, but the teacher, one Herr Hahn, had no trouble handling them. He was obviously a very good teacher. He was also a Nazi. We cut out pictures from newspapers to display in the classroom conveying the message that the *Führer* loves children. On at least one occasion our teacher came to class in his SS uniform. But he did not discriminate against the two "non-Arian" children in his class. On the first day, he told my parents that I would be able to stay at the school as long as the *Führer* would allow it; the *Führer* evidently allowed it for more than two years. Then, one day, Herr Hahn told the two "non-Arians": "You can go home," and that was the end of my time at the *Dockenhudener Volkschule*. My education continued at a tiny school for Jewish children started by my parents. Our teacher was Fräulein Henriette Arndt, and she taught us

on the ground floor of our grandmother's house. All of the ten or so pupils eventually got out of Hitler's Germany in time. But our teacher did not. She was deported and murdered.⁴ The parents of one boy committed suicide.

By 1938 it was clear that the whole family would have to leave Germany, and thanks to Uncle Theodore, who sponsored most of us, we obtained visas for England. My father, like almost all Jewish men, had been arrested during the so-called *Kristallnacht* on 9 November 1938, following the murder by a Jewish assassin of a German diplomat in Paris. My father was subsequently imprisoned for a month in the concentration camp Sachsenhausen–Oranienburg, outside Berlin. On 12 December 1938 he telephoned from Berlin that he had been released and was coming home. I remember accompanying mother to the shops at Blankenese to buy steak and cake. He never talked about his experiences in the camp.

On the following day the whole family, including our two grandmothers and Miss Thornham, a young English woman whom our uncle had sent to accompany us children to England had lunch together. After the meal we caught the suburban train to the main line station at Altona. As the train passed our garden we shouted "*Auf Wiedersehen!*" At the frontier an official examined our identity documents, which were marked with a J, and explained to the compartment at large: "These are Jewish children." The following day uncle Theodore phoned our parents that we had arrived at Hull. That is how I came to England. My parents and grandmothers arrived later. Our great-grandmother, aged 95 and an invalid, had to be left behind in Hamburg. She died, still living in my grandmother's house, early in 1939.

In England, the family eventually settled in South London. During most of the war we lived in a rented house at Epsom Downs, not far from the race-course where the Derby is run. My father had been admitted to England on a temporary visa, with the condition "that the holder does not stay in the United Kingdom for more than twelve months and does not enter any employment paid or unpaid." After war had broken out the visa became permanent. As all the young men were serving in the armed forces there was a shortage of teachers, so my father received permission to work, and he taught Latin at a number of schools in different parts of the country. After the war he got a post as a lecturer in Medieval History at Liverpool University, where he taught until he reached the age of retirement, and even a little bit longer. But while the war lasted, he was once more at home only during the holidays. At other

4 Christiane Pritzlaff, "Eine jüdische Lehrerin in Hamburg," in Miriam Gillis Carlebach and Wolfgang Grünberg (eds.), *Den Himmel zu pflanzen und die Erde zu gründen*, 1–2 Joseph Carlebach Konferenz, a publication of the Joseph Carlebach Institute, Hamburg 1995, 225–37.

times, the family consisted of mother, three children, and two grandmothers. Father's mother was a very warm and loving woman, who was also very fit for her age, and particularly fond of me, her eldest grandson. Mother's mother was an altogether different, and very austere personality. She was a semi-invalid, but she possessed a formidable and fascinating intelligence. Although she had left school without taking the final exam, she could nevertheless speak English and French fluently, almost as fluently as her native German. She had been educated at a girls' school kept by the widow of a Lutheran pastor and had taught herself some classical Greek in order to read the New Testament in the original. Even in her eighties she still remembered the Greek she had taught herself as a young girl. Although she knew a great deal more about Christianity and its history than about Judaism, she was quite emphatically Jewish. My grandmother could talk about all sorts of subjects: literature, religion, finance, politics, and, not least, family history. She used to tell stories about the adventurous and eventually very successful life her father led while trading cotton goods on the border of Texas and Mexico in the 1850s. The fortune great-grandfather Brach had earned in America was to some considerable extent still (or rather again) sustaining his descendants in the 1940s.

It was in England that I began to learn Latin. I had a little catching up to do, but that was not difficult. In those days, when children might start Latin at the age of ten or eleven, progress was very leisurely. From autumn 1940 to winter 1945 I attended Whitgift school in Croydon, not far from what had been the principal London aerodrome. Much of the first autumn term was spent in air-raid shelters. My fellow pupils considered me a German. They did not fully appreciate that I was also a Jew, and that it was therefore very much in my interest that Hitler should not win the war. Nevertheless, in spite of the continuous news about the war, and its hardships and casualties, I cannot remember that I suffered discrimination or hostility from either teachers or fellow pupils. There was, however, one significant exception: For the whole of my time at school I was never invited over by any of my schoolmates. So I missed out completely on that part of education that is provided by out-of-school friendships.

Whitgift was (and is) a very good school, but it was much less stimulating intellectually than home.⁵ Mother continued to read to us, more Goethe and Shakespeare, and also an old book of hers, entitled *Astronomische Abende*, a history of astronomy, which she had found interesting as a child. Later she also read us the *Confessions* of Augustine. About this time I was taking part in a correspondence course conducted by Rabbi Israel Mattuck, of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in St John's Wood, London, in preparation for confirmation at that

5 Peter Cox, *Memories of Whitgift: the Boys' Own Tales 1880–1980*, Cambridge, 2013.

synagogue. My father naturally took an interest in this, and we had many conversations about biblical history. He did not believe, as some people do, that "higher criticism," the historical study of how the Old Testament as we know it came into existence, amounted to "higher anti-semitism." On the contrary, he thought that biblical scholarship had greatly enhanced our understanding of the Old Testament by demonstrating the essential importance of the prophets in shaping older traditions into the biblical message that became the basis of Judaism. I was eventually confirmed, together with my cousin Anneliese Plaut, in a makeshift Liberal synagogue in St John's Wood; the synagogue itself had been burnt down in an air raid.

At the beginning of my second year at Whitgift, when Mr Twisleton, who taught Maths, was making up the new register, and I was slowly spelling out "L.i.e.b.e.s.c.h.u.e.t.z", he cut me short: "I am going to call you George," and George I remained for the rest of my school days, though nobody has ever called me by that name since. At Whitgift, I very much enjoyed playing rugby. I had another three years of Latin, but only one of Greek. This was in a class of two. The only other pupil had a German name, but was otherwise British. He was to go into the Church. Mr Lydall, our teacher, was very good and interesting, but he was one of a number of unhappy teachers who found it difficult to control larger classes.

I gave up Greek when I opted for the science side of the fifth form, intending to become a doctor. This was at least in part under the influence of my maternal grandmother. She had a Hamburg businessman's daughter's contempt for academics, except that she greatly respected the medical profession, which was the profession of her husband as well as of my paternal grandfather and my mother. At Whitgift far more boys specialised in science than in the humanities, and the instruction was very good. There was Mr Micklewright, a veteran Chemistry teacher, who, but for the war, would have long been in retirement. He used to talk not only about what we had to know for the examinations, but also more generally about the history of Chemistry and about recent discoveries. I also remember Mr Prime, who taught Botany, and whose special interest was ecology. He took his pupils on visits to study the different combination of plants in different soils. I was never able to remember the distinctive features of different species sufficiently well to benefit from these expeditions. Every week we had to write an essay on some botanical topic, and I certainly learnt a lot from that. I was not too bad at the theoretical aspects of Physics, Chemistry, and Biology, but was hopeless at the practical work. The fact that I took the Higher Schools Certificate in Science meant that I studied neither Latin nor Greek in the sixth form. I never fully closed this gap in my education, particularly as regards Greek. If I had gone into the classical sixth my later life might have been different, or then again it might not.

I left school in December 1945. The following two years and a bit longer I was a soldier in the British Army. Most of this time was spent in the desert, in camps next to the Suez Canal. I did manage a few days in Cairo, so that I was able to visit the pyramids, the Sphinx, and the Cairo Museum. I remember the view from the top of the great pyramid, which is really magnificent: on one side a great expanse of yellow desert and on the other the city, citadel, and minarets of Cairo set in the extraordinarily green valley of the Nile. I walked through the museum from bottom to top. It was like walking through several thousand years of history. Later, I was able to spend a short leave at the ancient capital of Thebes. I did not escape the stomach upset, vomiting, and diarrhoea that always threaten visitors in Egypt, but I was nevertheless impressed—as nobody can fail to be—by the enormous ruins of the temples at Karnak and Luxor, and by the Valley of the Kings.

In order to persuade parliament to allow conscription in peace time, the British government had promised that conscripts would be educated during their period of compulsory service. This education was to be provided by the minority of conscripts who had undergone a complete schooling. I was one of the lucky ones. After a short and, in its limited way, rather good course on teaching techniques, I was promoted to the rank of sergeant, and attached to a unit under orders to educate the men. I was not a success. I knew about school, and in the short course I had been taught some of the tricks of the trade. However, the teaching of young men who have left school early and have no wish at all to return, requires a completely different approach from teaching schoolchildren, and I really had no idea how to do it. As an education sergeant, I did, however, undoubtedly have a much more comfortable life than I would have done if I had remained in the ranks.

While I was in the army it became obvious how much better many of my less well-educated comrades were at practical tasks than I. It became abundantly clear that I was not cut out to be a doctor. I applied to University College, London, to study history.⁶ Fritz Saxl, the Director of the Warburg Institute, had told my father that two professors were outstanding at UCL: Hale Bellott in American History and A.H.M. Jones in Ancient History. I was duly interviewed for a place in the School of History, and was accepted. I opted for A.H.M. Jones and Ancient History, enrolling in History 1B: covering Greek and Roman, together with some Medieval History. The choice decided the rest of my life.

This was, incidentally, not the first time that the Warburg Institute had played a decisive part in my family's affairs. My father had been associated with the institute when it was still the *Bibliothek Warburg* in Hamburg, and Fritz Saxl, who became director of the library after the death of Aby Warburg,

6 Negley Harte and John North, *The World of UCL, 1828–2004*, London, 2004.

was a friend. When my mother was in her late twenties her parents arranged a marriage for her, as was quite usual in Jewish families at that time. She became engaged. Sheets of bed and table linen were embroidered with her and her fiancé's initials. But one day mother attended a lecture at the *Bibliothek Warburg* and there, whether accidentally or not, she met my father. That was the end of her engagement. My parents' marriage followed not long after. Thirteen years later, when the library had relocated to London, Gertrud Bing, Saxl's assistant and eventually his successor, sponsored my father's immigration.

A.H.M. Jones was a poor lecturer, and he had no pedagogical skills at all. His students had to exert themselves in order to learn from him. But for those who made the effort—as all members of the small class he taught at UCL did—it was very much worth while. What was perhaps the most characteristic feature of his approach was that he insisted that every reconstruction of the past must be based on the original sources. In my first essay for him I supported some statement by citing Theodor Mommsen, only to be rebuked: “Never mind Mommsen, what does Livy say?” Jones never described any aspect of ancient history without also explaining how his view was derived from the ancient sources. Jones had an impressive ability to synthesize disparate and fragmentary bits of source material to conjure up a historical reconstruction that was not only convincing, but seemed obvious once he had presented it. What also made a great impact on his students was the range of his interests. He was interested not only in Rome and Athens but in all the lands around the Mediterranean. Moreover, his interests covered not only those periods that were traditionally considered classical and exemplary, that is c. 600–300 BC for Athens, and 757BC–AD 200 for Rome, but also and most of all Late Antiquity. He was concerned with social and economic problems. As regards political history, he was above all interested in how political and administrative systems worked. Political and religious ideas and art and architecture had no place in his teaching. Not, I think, because he thought them unimportant, but because they did not lend themselves to his own approach to history. In summer 1951 Jones left UCL to take up a chair at Cambridge. Before he left I asked his advice on a subject for postgraduate research. He suggested that I might work either on the letters of Theodoret, the controversial bishop of the Syrian town of Cyrrhus in the fifth century, or on those of Libanius of Antioch, who was the most celebrated professor of Greek rhetoric (sophist) of his time. I chose Libanius. I have always known that I was lucky to have been taught by Jones, but it was only later that I realised quite how exceptionally distinguished a historian he was. Most of my publications show traces of his teaching.⁷

7 See my “A.H.M. Jones and the Later Roman Empire,” in D.F. Clark, M.M. Roxan, and J. Wilkes (eds.), *The Later Roman Empire Today: Papers Given in Honour of John Mann*, London, 1992,

In 1951–52 I took a course for the postgraduate Certificate in Education in order to qualify to teach in state secondary schools. At the same time, I began to work through the writings of Libanius, first the letters and later the political speeches. It was slow work. I now felt the handicap of not having done Greek in the fifth and sixth forms at school. In spring 1955 I married Margaret Taylor, who had also been a student at UCL, and had graduated in English. My thesis was nearing completion, and I thought that I now really ought to get a job. I applied for a large number of teaching posts as well as for a position in the library of the British Museum. It was not easy. With a degree in Ancient History I fell between two stools: I was not properly qualified to teach Classics, whereas teaching History would involve mainly more recent periods, since Ancient History was not yet in England the autonomous teaching subject it has since become. At last I was offered and accepted a post to teach History at the boys' grammar school in Barnsley, the Yorkshire mining town. On the next day I was invited to an interview at the British Museum. In view of the responsibility I had accepted at Barnsley, I turned down the interview. When I related this to Professor Momigliano, Jones's successor and my supervisor, he asked me whether I had gone mad. He was quite right. The job in Barnsley proved a catastrophe. I lasted no more than a term. But there was a silver lining. If I had remained at Barnsley, I would probably never have finished my thesis. As it was, I now had time to finish the dissertation, so that I was in a position to submit it in December 1956. Earlier, Margaret had read through my text from beginning to end, and had greatly improved it by removing much obscure verbosity, and many unnecessary repetitions. Above all, she crossed out innumerable references to an unfortunate paucity of evidence, leading to diffident admissions "that we do not know . . . that we cannot be certain. . . ."

On the very day on which I submitted my thesis, I learnt that Paul Petit had published *Libanius et la vie municipale à Antioche au quatrième siècle* (Paris, 1955). This was, and remains, a great book, but for me its appearance was a disaster, for as was made clear to me, there would now be no room for a second book on Libanius and Antioch. Consequently, I spent the next six years as a schoolmaster. For five years of this time (1959–63) I taught boys and girls Latin and German at Heanor Grammar School in Derbyshire.⁸ I hope that my pupils learnt something. The lessons certainly greatly increased my own knowledge

1–8; and "Afterword: A.H.M. Jones and the Later Roman Empire," in David M. Gwynn (ed.), *A.H.M. Jones and the Later Roman Empire*, Leiden/Boston 2008, 251–69.

8 Robert M. Mee, *Follow the Master: A History of Heanor Grammar School 1893–76*, Publications of the Heanor Local History Society 8, Derby: Moorleys, 2008. Robert Mee was one of the last generation of pupils at Heanor Grammar School, before it became comprehensive. He took a degree in Classics, and I taught one of his courses in 1979–80, my first year at Nottingham.

of Latin grammar and syntax, and also my appreciation of Virgil's poetry. As a teacher of German, I took small groups of pupils through Gottfried Keller's *Romeo und Juliet auf dem Dorf*, Annette von Droste Hülshoff's *Die Judenbuche*, and Eduard Möricke's, *Mozart auf der Reise nach Prag*. I think that pupils and teacher alike enjoyed these set-books.

This was a time of change in the classical world. A Higher School Certificate pass in Latin was now no longer a compulsory requirement at any university for admission to courses in the humanities. This meant that schools were under great pressure to reduce the teaching time assigned to Latin. What had been a three- or even four-year course had to be compressed into two years. This meant concentrating on the most frequently used words, and on the similarities rather than the differences between the declensions and conjugations. I even managed to get one exceptionally gifted pupil through the Higher School Certificate in one year. He only scraped through, but this, I think, was because he had not learnt the translations of his set-books by heart. This was a common practice, not only among the less gifted students, both at school and at university.

While I was at Heanor, the local authority had decided to abolish selective grammar schools and to replace them with unselective comprehensives. The proposal was of course much debated, though the outcome was never in doubt. The teaching profession prepared for drastic change. These years saw the development of the Cambridge Latin Course, and the beginning of courses in Classical Civilization, that is in classical literature and history studied from translated texts. In due course, the widespread adoption of comprehensive education greatly reduced the amount of teaching of classical languages in schools, but courses on Classical Civilization and Ancient History enabled a wider range of school children than ever before to learn about the Greeks and the Romans. Subsequently, university classics departments one by one also began to offer courses in Ancient History and Literature based on translated texts, and this made it possible for the majority of the departments to survive. I think it is true to say that while education generally has come to focus increasingly on the most modern and therefore supposedly most "relevant" history and literature, young people, and older people, too, continue to be very interested in the Greeks and Romans.

I was an adequate, but not particularly good teacher. Teaching calls for a certain distinct quality of personality, one that not only maintains discipline in the class room, but also in some mysterious way compels pupils to feel that they must learn what the teacher tells them to learn. Some individuals have this trait, others are completely without it. I was able to keep my class from talking while I was actually speaking—at least I managed that at the

coeducational Heanor Grammar School—but I could not cast the peculiar spell that is the professional secret of the born teacher. During these years at Heanor I published three articles based on my thesis. I also wrote a paper on Virgil's *Georgics*, Book III, which I had read with a sixth former,⁹ and another arguing against J.N.L. Myres that the Pelagians did not have social aims.¹⁰ I spent many weekends and a whole Easter holiday compiling an index for A.H.M. Jones's *Later Roman Empire*.

Robert Browning, who had been extremely helpful when I was working on my dissertation, several times encouraged me to apply for university posts.¹¹ After one or two unsuccessful applications, I applied for a lectureship in the Classics Department at Leicester University. Professor Addi Wasserstein, who was also a refugee from Nazi Germany, was head of the department.¹² It would seem that the testimonials professors Momigliano, Jones, and Browning wrote for me, as well as that from Mr Stone, the headmaster of Heanor Grammar School, who died in 2014, aged 94, hale and hearty to the end, were sufficiently favourable to persuade Addi Wasserstein and his professorial colleagues on the appointments committee that I was the right man for the job. I was to start in October 1963, and to teach some Latin, lecture on the *Menaechmi* of Plautus, and on books 6 and 7 of Thucydides. I was also to teach some Roman history: Ancient History was at this time still very much ancillary to language and literature, though this was soon to change. That is how I became a lecturer in Classics and Ancient History.

Leicester University was a stimulating environment. It was small enough for members of different departments and faculties to get to know each other. There were no fewer than three societies at whose functions staff of different departments could meet and discuss: a Humanities Society, a Social History Society, and a Victorian Studies Society. The enormous expansion of universities has since greatly reduced opportunities for interdepartmental contacts.

Classics was a happy department. When I joined it there was no shortage of applicants for its courses, particularly from a few schools in the Newcastle area. For third-year students we replaced prose composition with literary comment: the students were asked to write commentaries on the ways authors used the language in selected extracts of prose or verse from different periods.

9 "Beasts and Man in the Third Book of Virgil's *Georgics*," *Greece and Rome* 12 (1965): 64–77.

10 "Did the Pelagian Movement Have Social Aims?" *Historia* 12, (1963): 227–41.

11 Averil Cameron, "Robert Browning, 1914–97," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 105 (1999): 288–306.

12 David Wasserstein, "Abraham Wasserstein," *Scripta Classica Israelica* 15 (1996): 1–6; a bibliography of his publications, *ibid.* 7–15.

I shared a Latin course with Duncan Cloud, a Latinist with a profound interest in Christian Latin and Roman law, and I certainly learnt a lot from talking to him about the pieces we set. Sheila Spire lectured on classical art and literature, particularly Greek tragedy. She was a good and enterprising teacher, with whom I had many stimulating conversations. She had many ideas, but suffered from writer's block, which made her quite unable to publish. This made her deeply unhappy, so that she eventually took her own life.

Towards the end of the sixties the transformation of so many grammar schools into comprehensives resulted in a sharp drop in the number of applications for courses for Honours in Classics or Latin. However, Leicester had an Honours Degree in Combined Honours, which offered Classical Civilization as one of its options. Courses in Classical Civilization could be taken for one, two, or three years. These courses became very popular, and the number of students opting for Classical Civilization increased year after year.

The late sixties was also a time of student unrest. Students occupied part of the administrative section of the university building and demanded a greater share in the government of the university. It was all quite good-natured. Addi Wasserstein positioned himself on the stairs and dissuaded the students from occupying the library. The long-term effect of the unrest was to make university teaching less subject- and more student orientated, a development that is still taking place. In time, this trend brought about considerable change in what was taught, and how it was taught, at both the secondary and university levels, though the wider consequences of this development for good or bad are still impossible to evaluate objectively. The fact that students who had their education paid for by the state were making trouble for the universities probably reduced public confidence in the public benefits of a university education, and made it easier for politicians to cut funding. It hastened the end of a golden age.

Much of my research has always been related to my teaching. Two papers on Thucydides,¹³ and one on Livy,¹⁴ developed out of courses I was teaching at Leicester. Now at last, I had an opportunity to get a revised version of my dissertation published. Tchalenko's *Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord*,¹⁵ and of course A.H.M. Jones's *Later Roman Empire*, published in 1964, had enormously increased our understanding of late antique Syria, and indeed of the whole

13 "The Structure and Function of the Melian Dialogue," *JHS* 88 (1968): 73–77; "Thucydides and the Sicilian Expedition," *Historia* 17 (1968): 289–306.

14 "The Religious Position of Livy's *History*," *JRS* 57 (1967): 45–55.

15 The first two volumes were published in 1953, but I had not seen them when I finished my thesis in 1956.

late-Roman world. At the same time, a centralising and nationalising Labour government was making the theme of the negative impact on civic—self-government of an active and interventionist central administration seem topical. That is how *Antioch, City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire*, came to be written and published.¹⁶

I have always been interested in religion, not least because of the massive influence our family's Jewishness had on my early life. I was now teaching a third-year course on the persecution of the Christians. This was the stimulus that produced my *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion* (Oxford, 1979). John North's still unpublished D.Phil dissertation¹⁷ had shown that in the later Republic, Roman paganism was more than just a mass of formal rituals or an antiquarian relic;¹⁸ that it was, in fact, a living religion. The question of how it worked, and why it was eventually abandoned, became all the more interesting.

In 1979 Edward Thompson, head of Classics and Archaeology at Nottingham University, retired.¹⁹ I applied for the post and was appointed. That was lucky. Sustained pressure on university finances meant that no professor of classics was going to be appointed in Britain for more than a decade. Worse, at Leicester many, or even all, of the older professors would have to take early retirement. Nottingham was stronger financially, and so was able to avoid compulsory retirements. But the pressure was felt there, too, and it was impossible to replace retiring members of staff. Small departments like Classics suffered most, and Nottingham's Classics department would undoubtedly have come to an end if the government had not introduced the controversial policy of closing small, and therefore presumably "uneconomic" departments. Our Classics department was able to offer a home to seven new and extremely able lecturers from Sheffield and Lancaster, whose departments had been closed

16 Oxford, 1972.

17 *The Interrelation of State Religion and Politics in Roman Political Life from the End of the Punic War to the Time of Sulla* (D.Phil, Oxford, 1968).

18 A view accepted by even the best scholars: e.g., "I think I have sufficiently proved that the life has gone out of these ideas, and that the worship has consequently become meaningless." W. Warde Fowler, *The Religious Experience of the Roman People*, London, 1922, 353; cf. K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte*, Munich, 1960, 287–88, 360ff. It reflected a widely held liberal assumption, shared, I think, by my parents, that religion was essentially a matter of individual conviction, and that the communal element of liturgy and ritual was "mere ceremony."

19 R.A. Markus, "Edward, Arthur Thompson, 1914–1994," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 111 (2000): 679–93. John Rich lists Edward Thompson's publications in *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 32 (1988): 11–18.

down. With a staff of eleven it was for a short time much stronger than it had ever been.

Nottingham was, and still is, an extremely popular university, owing, in part, to its central location, which enables students to go home and so to keep in touch with family and friends on the weekends. We had as many students as we were allowed to take, even for language-based courses. The department offered Single Honours in Classic, Latin, and Greek, and Joint Honours in Latin and French. We ran Joint Honours in Ancient History and History and in Ancient History and Archaeology as well. Nottingham also started a Combined Studies degree. As the number of applicants with Latin or Greek at A level—or indeed at any level—declined, courses in beginner-level Latin and Greek became essential. To be worthwhile these courses must inspire students to really want to learn the language, and to do a lot of voluntary study. That is not at all easy to achieve.

I retired in 1992. Soon after, Archaeology received a professor of its own and became an independent department, which it should have become much earlier. The relationship between Ancient History and Archaeology remains something of a problem: the two disciplines study different kinds of evidence, employ different methodologies, and throw light on different aspects of ancient societies. It is a mistake to expect archaeological research to answer questions set by historians. On the other hand, I remain convinced the two branches of scholarship need to draw on each other's results.

In retirement I set out to write a book about what happened to the ancient cities after the fourth century. That topic had always interested me. However, it was only after my colleague John Rich had asked me to contribute a chapter to a volume he was editing, and after I had been asked me to write a chapter for *CAH* XIV,²⁰ that my work became focused on the “later late city.” The resulting book, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City*, was published in 2001,²¹ but the topics of chapters I–III, XV, and XXI of the present volume are still closely related to its subject matter.

In these years a second interest was competing with the late city: the part played by the barbarians in the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. In 1990 I published *Barbarians and Bishops*. It includes a chapter on Alaric and Alaric's Goths, in which I argue that Alaric's Goths originated as a unit of mainly Gothic

20 “The End of the Ancient City,” in J.W. Rich (ed.), *The City in Late Antiquity*, London, 1992, 1–49; “Administration and Politics in the Cities of the Fifth to the Mid-Seventh Centuries,” in A.M. Cameron, B. Ward Perkins, and L.M. Whitby (eds.), *CAH* 14 (2001), 207–37.

21 I did much of the reading for it at the Princeton Institute for Advanced Study in autumn 1993.

soldiers, serving in the Roman army that defeated the usurper Eugenius, and that they only became a full people in the course of their lengthy wanderings.²² My argument uses the sociological doctrine of “ethnogenesis,” which I had found in Herwig Wolfram’s *History of the Goths*.²³ I suspect that this chapter led to my being invited to participate in the discussions of the Transformation of the Roman World Project, run by the European Science Foundation. I was in the group examining the accommodation of barbarians in provinces of the Empire. Walter Pohl chaired the section and the discussions were extremely stimulating. Chapters VI–XII in this volume, and chapters X–XIV in my *Decline and Change in Late Antiquity*,²⁴ were written either for this project or as critical reflections on points raised in discussion.

The discussions were always stimulating and interesting, though I sometimes felt the “odd man out,” because it seemed that most of my colleagues, and not least Walter Pohl, had a completely closed mind to any view that admitted that these northern *gentes* had genuine histories and traditions of their own. Not content to demolish the view that these tribes were essentially racial organizations, they relied on sociological theory that ethnicity is nothing more than a negotiated system of social classification, and that ethnic differences are “situational,”²⁵ to deny these peoples any institutions and values of their own, and so to reduce their contribution to medieval Europe to nothing at all. Such dogmatism is easily explained as a reaction to Nazi racism but it is nevertheless extraordinarily one-sided. The work of the great French historian Fustel de Coulanges is one-sided in a very similar way.²⁶

When the *Decline and Fall of the Roman City* appeared, I was uncertain what to do next. Michael Whitby suggested that I might translate the letters of Ambrose for the Liverpool Translated Texts for Historians series. Robert

22 *Barbarians and Bishop: Army, Church and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom*, Oxford, 1990, 48–85.

23 First German edition, Munich, 1979; revised English edition, translated by T.J. Dunlap, Berkeley/London, 1988.

24 *Decline and Change in Late Antiquity: Religion, Barbarians, and their Historiography*, Variorum Collected Studies, Aldershot, 2006.

25 W. Pohl explains, and adroitly defends, this view in “Telling the Difference: Signs of Ethnic Identity,” in W. Pohl and H. Reimitz (eds.), *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300–800*, London/Boston/Cologne, 1988, 17–69, esp. 21. But it is not enough for members of an ethnic community to be distinguishable from their neighbours. They must also share a cultural heritage in order to be able to cooperate as a society.

26 See A.D. Momigliano, “The Ancient City of Fustel de Coulanges,” in *Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography*, Oxford, 1977, 325–43, esp. 329–30 on de Coulanges’s *Histoire des institutions politiques de l’ancienne France*, vol. II: *L’invasion germanique*, Paris, 1891.

Markus²⁷ mentioned that Carole Hill, a former student of his, might be a useful assistant. Carole played an important part in the planning and early years' work on the volume until domestic duties forced her to step aside; so I only translated the political letters.²⁸ Work on Ambrose recalled me to Chrysostom.

The two men were certainly totally different. While Ambrose was a very successful bishop of Milan, and, among other things, an extremely skilful politician, Chrysostom died in exile. But both men found themselves in comparable situations of conflict, and their writings show some surprising similarities. The reasons for this seemed worth investigating. Then, at the Patristic Conference of 2007, Wendy Mayer talked to me about Martin Illert's revisionist and challenging views on Chrysostom. So I decided that my next book should be about both Ambrose and Chrysostom.²⁹

Many of my more recent papers have been written for conferences, and Antioch and Syria have been the predominant theme. So my publications will probably end, as they started, with writings about Syria. In the present volume, chapters XIII–XVI are about defence and settlement. Chapter XVI relates how immigrants and transhumants from the Arabia settled in the frontier area and were subsequently handed much of the responsibility for guarding and controlling the desert frontier. Chapters XVI–XXI are concerned with aspects of Christianisation. Chapter XX is about Theodoret. So I have at last responded to A.H.M. Jones's suggestion that I should work on either Libanius or Theodoret by working on both. The circle is complete.

Looking back, I find that most of my work has been instigated by external influences, those of my father, of my teachers, of books I happened to read, of lectures I was invited to give at specialised conferences. My interpretations have always been greatly influenced by political happenings at the time. As an old man—and as a younger man, too—my views have been conservative. I have been lucky in that I have lived through a period when Late Antique studies were flourishing. The great masters Jones, Henri Irénée Marrou, and Santo Mazzarino were followed by Averil Cameron, Peter Brown, John Matthews and Alan Cameron. I also learned a great deal from the next generation of young scholars, who directed scholarly attention to new areas. But I

27 "Robert Austin Markus, 1924–2010," *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the British Academy* xi, 475–89. Robert generously read, and corrected, and when he thought criticism appropriate, criticised most of the work I did at Nottingham.

28 *Ambrose of Milan, Political Letters and Speeches*, Translated Texts for Historians 43, Liverpool 2005. Mark Humphrey was an extremely constructive and helpful editor.

29 *Ambrose and John Chrysostom: Clerics between the Desert and Empire*, Oxford, 2011.

reacted against the minimising of the impact of the Germanic tribes, the black-listing of “decline,”³⁰ and the rejection of “crisis.”³¹ The old and the young look back on different experiences. They have also read different books, and they have had different teachers. At school some of my teachers had been teaching since before the first World War. But the old are not therefore always wrong. Immigration meant that I had my family and career in England. But if it had not been for Hitler, and if we had stayed in Germany, would my life have been so very different? It was because of our being Jews that we became refugees. My Jewish background has served me well in my career as an Ancient Historian. But Judaism has figured very little in my writings. At the same time the importance of religion has declined throughout the Western world to an astonishing degree. I find that regrettable.

In 2012 I was invited, together with some other now very ancient refugees from Nazi Germany, to talk to sixth formers in a number of schools in Hamburg and the surrounding area about our experiences as Jews in Hitler's Germany. The invitation was repeated in 2013, and, provided I am fit enough, I will go again in autumn 2014. My own experience has of course been very mild. My family left Germany before the war. We have been among the lucky ones. My colleagues on these visits relate experiences that are far worse than anything I have to tell.³² But the teachers in Hamburg and Lübeck are keen that their pupils should learn about the terrible things that were done—so that nothing of that kind should ever be allowed to happen again.

2 Introduction to the Volume

The first part of this volume deals with developments in the West, the second with developments in the East. Footnotes draw attention to some of the work that has been published since I wrote my articles, or that I missed.

The opening chapter deals with rubbish disposal in the cities of the early Empire, and highlights, among other things, the importance and widespread use of recycling. Chapter 2, on the “Crisis of the Third Century,” introduces the transition to Late Antiquity. The chapter discusses whether what happened to

30 See my *Decline and Change* (n. 24, above), papers xv and xvii; and in this volume, Chapter 3.

31 This volume, Chapter 2.

32 Eva Szepesi, *Ein Mädchen allein auf der Flucht: Ungarn–Slowakei–Polen* (1944–45), Berlin: Metropol, 2011. Eva Szepesi was on the 2012 visit.

the Empire in the third century deserves to be classified as a crisis. I answer the question positively. The need for radical reorganisation after the crisis gave rise to many of the characteristics that make Late Antiquity a distinct period.

In the third chapter I discuss whether the changes undergone by the cities of the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity amount to “decline.” I again answer the question positively. My answer is based on an evaluation of precisely those features, political, urban, and demographic, which distinguish the classical city of the Greeks and Romans from urban conglomerations of other regions and other periods. If we experienced radical change of the kind undergone by so many cities in the West, and ultimately also in the Greek East, we would surely consider that we were living through a catastrophe. At the same time I would not deny that the resulting changes had some important positive aspects, that Late Antiquity was creative as well as destructive, and that the foundations of a new and different culture—or cultures—were being laid. If contemporary scholars prefer to describe the process as a transformation, the difference between us is one of evaluation rather than of fact.³³

In the following chapter, I turn from the decline of cities to decline in the countryside. The chapter draws attention to what seems to be a fact, namely that in many regions, both in the West and the East, the establishment of Roman rule was followed by a dramatic increase in the number of settlements and by an equally dramatic economic development, which did not, however, prove sustainable in the long run, though the reversal took place at different times and under different political conditions in different regions. This phenomenon raises many questions that still await an answer.

Chapter 5, “Landlords and Warlords,” stresses the importance of the fact that members of the imperial aristocracy of Late Antiquity (i.e., the senators of Rome and Constantinople, as well as the much wider senatorial order)³⁴ were civilian and therefore vulnerable. They possessed immense wealth and great influence, which enabled them to dominate key administrative positions. But they had no military power. They were quite unable to mobilize clients into a force strong enough to confront the barbarian commanders who took over the government in the West or later the Muslim armies that overran the East. In this way the imperial elite was fundamentally different from the warrior aristocracies of the Germanic successor kingdoms.

33 Since I wrote Chapter 3, Helen Saradi has published a major work on the early Byzantine city, *The Byzantine City in the Sixth Century: Literary Images and Historical Reality*, Athens, 2006.

34 For the distinction: A.H.M. Jones, *LRE*, 525–33.

The following four chapters are about barbarian identity. Chapter 6 reviews the debate on the nature of the Germanic tribes that established kingdoms in the provinces of the Empire. It argues that these people did indeed possess both core traditions and a sense of shared identity, and that these had evolved well before their entry into the Roman world. In Chapter 7, I argue that even though much of the material of Jordanes' *Getica* is derived from Greek or Roman sources, his history of the Goths nevertheless preserves older traditions, which are genuinely Gothic. In Chapter 8, I oppose the view that Jordanes was a propagandist for the East Roman state, and that his writings were designed to assist the generals of Justinian who at his time of writing were preparing to overthrow the Ostrogothic kingdom. Jordanes was a barbarian who had been thoroughly Romanized, but who also remained proud of his Gothic heritage. I suggest that the writings of Jordanes are interesting precisely because they illustrate the state of mind of one of the many barbarians who prospered in the service of the Roman state and served it loyally, without abandoning their ancestral identity. In Chapter 9, I examine descriptions of barbarians in the writings of different authors, and conclude that their evidence ought not to be rejected as a mere reiteration of an outdated stereotype, but that these descriptions are valid testimony that the dress of a typical Goth or Vandal could indeed be distinguished from that of a typical Roman.³⁵

There follow three chapters dealing with features of the successor kingdoms that made them very different from provinces of the Empire. The chapter on barbarians and taxes (Chapter 10) was stimulated by C. Wickham's *Framing the Early Middle Ages*,³⁶ and his distinction between the Roman Empire's tax-based system of administration and the land-based system of the successor kingdoms. In Chapter 11, "Violence in the Barbarian Kingdoms," I maintain that, contrary to the views of some contemporary scholars, Frankish Gaul was a more violent society than Roman Gaul had been. In Chapter 12, I argue that the distinction between Goths and Romans remained important in Visigothic Hispania right up to the end of the Visigothic kingdom, in as much as Goths remained the ruling people until the Arab conquest. In Visigothic Spain, Gothic identity was not simply "situational."³⁷ The same person could not choose to

35 More sceptical: P. von Rummel, "Gotisch, barbarisch oder völkisch? Methodische Überlegungen zur ethnischen Interpretation von Kleidung," in W. Pohl and Mehofer (eds.), *Archäologie der Identität*, Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 16, Vienna, 2010, 51–77.

36 *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800*, Oxford, 2005.

37 Otherwise, Patrick Geary, "Ethnic Identity as a Situational Construct in the Early Middle Ages, 300–1100," *Mitteilungen der anthropologischen Gesellschaft* 113 (1983): 15–26, and

profess a Gothic or a Roman identity depending on circumstances. It was not just a matter of personal choice. A would-be Goth had to be accepted as such by the Gothic establishment.

All the chapters in Part 2, with the exception of the last, are concerned with Northern Syria. This region underwent a dramatic transformation in Hellenistic and Roman times, a transformation which started in the third century BC with a succession of cities founded by the Seleucids, but the chapters in this volume are only about developments in Late Antiquity. The first three chapters are concerned with what was, and still remains, a problem: the extraordinary economic development of the desert fringe of Syria (and indeed of other regions of the Near East), in Late Antiquity. Chapters 13 and 14 are about settlement in the steppe bordering the Arabian desert. Chapter 15³⁸ discusses what happened to the cities in Northern Syria in Late Antiquity. This was of course quite different from what happened to cities in the West at the same time. There has been some important work in this area since I wrote those chapters. Field surveys have provided more information about the nature of occupation on the Plain of Antioch in Late Antiquity—and earlier.³⁹ The last decade has also seen the publication of important research on the role of phylarchs and Arab federates in the defence of Syria. Chapter 16 traces the history of the Syrian and Arabian *limes* from Diocletian to the Arab conquest. It pays particular attention to the Jafnid dynasty of Arab federate leaders, who in the sixth century

works cited in W. Pohl, G. Clemens, and R. Payne, *Visions of Community in the Post-Roman and Islamic World*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2012, 105, nn. 25–27.

- 38 G. Bowersock, “Chalcis ad Belum and Anasartha in Byzantine Syria,” *Travaux et Mémoires* 14 (2002): 47–56. M.M. Mango, “Byzantine Settlement Extension in North-Central Syria: The case of Androna-Andarin,” in A. Borrut, M. Debié, A. Papaconstantinou, and J.-P. Sodini (eds.), *Le Proche-Orient de Justinien aux Abbassides, peuplement et dynamiques spatiales*, Bibliothèque de l’Antiquité Tardive 19, Turnhout, 2011, 93–126. B. De Vries, *Um el-Jamal: A Frontier Town and Its Landscape in Northern Jordan*, vol. 1: *Fieldwork, 1972–1981*, Portsmouth, RI, 1998.
- 39 K.A. Yenner, *Amuq Valley Regional Projects: Surveys on the Plain of Antioch and Orontes Delta, Turkey, 1995–2002*, Chicago Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2011. J. Cassana, “The Archaeological Landscape of Late Roman Antioch,” in I. Sandwell and J. Huskinson (eds.), *Culture and Society in Later Roman Antioch*, Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2004, 102–25. Trevor Bryce, *Ancient Syria: A Three Thousand Year History*, Oxford, 2014. P.M.G. Ackermann and G.M. Schwartz, *The Archaeology of Syria: From Complex Hunter Gatherers to Early Urban Societies (c. 16,000–300 BC)*, Cambridge, 2003, traces earlier cycles of the rise and fall of urbanism, in the third and second millennia BC, respectively, pp. 235–46, 351–59.

built up a powerful military following, comparable to the formidable bands built up by barbarian federate leaders, most notably by Alaric, in the West. I maintain that earlier generations of scholars were right to describe the Jafnids as Ghassanids, and that their originally quite disparate military following was given cohesion and unity by accepting Ghassanid identity.

Chapter 17, “Julian’s ‘Hymn to the Mother of the Gods,’” is the first of five chapters on different aspects of Christianisation. It examines Julian’s unsuccessful attempt to revive paganism, especially his attempt to make the traditional gods more acceptable to contemporary intellectuals by interpreting the primeval myths allegorically, claiming that they are veiled descriptions of a neo-platonic view of the working of the universe. Chapter 18 reviews the progress of Christianisation at Antioch, and the fading out of traditional worship, noting also that many traditional beliefs and practices lived on as widely held superstitions.⁴⁰ That Christianisation met with only very sporadic opposition does not necessarily mean that pagans viewed the extinction of their ancestral cults with indifference. However, they were evidently not spurred on by anything like the zeal and urgency of activist Christians. How Christianisation influenced the imagery of domestic mosaic floors at Antioch is the subject of Chapter 19.⁴¹

Theodoret’s demonstration that Christianity is consistent with the teachings of the classical Greek philosophers, above all with those of Plato, is the subject of Chapter 20. Theodoret was a leading theologian of the School of Antioch in the first half of the fifth century. He had received a very thorough Greek education, but unlike the majority of Hellenes, whether pagan or Christian, he was also very conscious of the fact that he was living on the margin of the Hellenised world, and he rejected the confident belief of the educated Hellenes that their language and culture were uniquely valuable.

Chapter 21, “The School of Antioch and Its Enemies,” explores the Antiochene school of biblical commentary, which synthesized elements of the two Christian traditions of Syria and Mesopotamia which differed in

40 See also A.D. Lee, “Episcopal Power and Perils in the Late Sixth Century,” in John Drinkwater and Benet Salway (eds.), *Wolf Liebeschuetz Reflected*, BICS Supp. 91 (2007): 99–106.

41 On the background to this, see Beatrice Caseau, “Le crypto paganisme et les frontières du licite: un jeu de masques,” in Peter Brown and Rita Lizzi Testa (eds.), *Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire: The Breaking of a Dialogue (IVth–VIth Century AD)*, Vienna/Berlin/Münster: Lit, 2011, 541–71.

important respects. In Mesopotamia Syriac was already becoming a Christian literary language.⁴²

The essays on West and East are not on parallel themes. The Western section includes chapters about the Germanic successor states, but has nothing about Christianisation, which was the most important development of all in the long run. The Eastern chapters cover the theme of Christianisation, but have nothing about the rise of Islam and the establishment of the Caliphate. The rise of the Jafnids/Ghassanids discussed in chapters 16, Theodore's relativising of the values of the Hellenic language and literature, and the influence of Mesopotamian Christianity treated respectively in chapters 20 and 21, do, however, foreshadow the East's emancipation from the Greco-Roman culture of the Mediterranean area. Hellenisation, which had been advancing ever since Alexander the Great's conquest of the Near East, was beginning to retreat.

The establishment of the Islamic empire was comparable to the establishment of the Germanic kingdoms in the West up to a point, but the consequences of its establishment were quite different. The Islamic conquests separated the Near East from the Hellenic-Roman culture of the West, and ultimately caused Islam and Arabic to become the dominant religion and language of the whole region.⁴³ But in the social and economic sphere the immediate impact of the imposition of Islamic rule was much less radical than the changes that had accompanied the collapse of imperial rule in the West. Among the lands governed from Constantinople it was only the provinces on the lower Danube that in the sixth and seventh centuries experienced not just the collapse of Roman administration, but that of the whole Greco-Roman way of life. This catastrophe is described in chapter 22, the last in the volume.

3 Acknowledgements

My preoccupation with the themes treated in the chapters in this volume has been stimulated and helped by discussions at conferences organised as part of

42 Now see D.A. Michelson, "It Is Not the Custom of our Syriac Language: Reconsidering the Role of Translation in the Polemics of Philoxenos of Mabbug"; Ellen Muehberger, "Negotiations with Death: Ephrem's Control of Death in Dialogue"; K. Gibbons, "Nature, Law, and Human Freedom in Bardasian's *Book of Laws of the Countries*", all in D. Brakke, D. Deliyannis, and E. Watts (eds.), *Shifting Cultural Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, Farnham/Burlington, VT, 2012, on pp. 7–22, 23–34, 35–47, respectively.

43 Now: Peter Sarris, *Empires of Faith: The Fall of Rome to the Rise of Islam, 500–700*, Oxford, 2013.

three collective projects: the Transformation of the Roman World programme of the European Science Foundation, 1993–98; the International Research Network Impact of Empire at Radboud University, Nijmegen; and the Shifting Frontier Conferences organised by the Society for Late Antiquity.

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PART 1

The West



Rubbish Disposal in Greek and Roman Cities*

1 Libanius *Oration* L and the Disposal of Building Rubble from Antioch

Oration 50 of Libanius is perhaps the only speech surviving from Antiquity which is exclusively concerned with the disposal of rubbish, or rather strictly speaking with the disposal of rubble produced by building operations. As you will see the speech has a good deal of interest for the social historian, even if it is written in a generalising style which passes over the detail which might help the practising Archaeologist.

The speech—or rather pamphlet—was written at Antioch in Syria, in the reign of the emperor Theodosius I around the year 385 (Foerster, R., *Ed.* t. 3. 467 n. 3). In it Libanius asks the emperor to intervene in the affairs of the city of Antioch in order to put an end to an abuse and to punish the perpetrators. What was happening was that the peasants who brought corn and hay to market in the city in the morning were being compelled to lend their donkeys to carry building rubble out of the city before they were allowed to go home.

The rubble was produced by building operations. It came from collapsed or demolished buildings (*oikia*) and from excavations for the foundation of new buildings (Ch2). It was transported in sacks or even wrapped in the peasant's cloak, and we are told that in winter it soaked up water to become slimy mud. So it would seem to have been made up of earthy material, perhaps mud-brick or wattle and clay, rather than stone. It was deposited outside the gates of the walled city. I don't know whether we can deduce that we can expect to find rubbish outside the walls in the neighbourhood of the gates of ancient cities generally. Antioch itself is now under so many meters of soil that it would be very difficult to test Libanius' testimony by excavation there. Much human waste ended up in the Orontes in the Second Century BC (Polybius v.59.11). In Libanius' time the city had a sewer (*Or* XLVI.21).

The building work which produced the rubble might be public or private. In each case the men in charge were wealthy men. But even if the building was

* This article was previously published in *Sordes Urbis*, eds. X.D. Raventos & J.-A. Remola, *Monografías de la Escuela Española de Historia y Arqueología en Roma* 24, Rome: Breitschneider, 2000, pp. 51–61.

carried out on behalf of the city, the work was not a liturgy, that is the men in charge of the project organised the work, but did not have to pay for it out of their own pocket, nor did they have to employ their own slaves and equipment (Ch7). The cost of stones and tiles and labour was paid by the city out of its own income (Ch3). But the rubble produced by clearing the site was carried away by the forced labour of peasants. The use of forced labour for this purpose was also granted to private individuals building for their own use (Ch17), by special favour of the provincial governor (Ch16).

The peasants subjected to this disagreeable compulsory duty had come into the city for no other purpose than to market their produce. They were perhaps mostly small peasant proprietors, but also tenants—since we are expressly told that the tenants of *honorati* that is the tenants of ex officials of senatorial rank and of retired generals, were exempted (Ch9). The typical animal requisitioned for rubble disposal was the donkey, but mules and camels were also involved (Ch16). The procedure was that the men looking for forced transport asked the governor for written authorization to requisition the animals coming in through a particular gate. Armed with this paper they would stop the peasants returning from the market and compel them to take their animals to the building site. There they would have the animals loaded with rubble, which they would then carry out of the city on their way home. The only way to escape this imposition was to bribe the soldiers at the gates. The whole business took up a lot of time, so that peasants who might have hoped to be home by midday, might still find themselves on the road after nightfall and exposed to attack by bandits (Ch29), since they would not be able to afford the cost of an inn.

Compulsory services of various kinds, *munera extraordinaria*, were frequently demanded in the comprehensive tax-demand (indiction) sent out every year by the central administration to the provinces. But Libanius insists that this particular *munus* did not have the sanction of any imperial regulation. It was a local custom, that the imperial governors granted this particular favour to individual provincials, no doubt to the wealthiest and most influential among them, men who had an abundance of everything, “countless” camels, numerous mules and yokes of oxen, and grooms looking after an abundance of horses (Ch32). They clearly were individuals whose favour even the governors found worth cultivating (Ch10). Libanius wants this custom to be abolished, and the people responsible, both those who have granted and those who have received these favours to be punished.

Libanius insists on injustice of the whole procedure and points out the damage suffered by the small peasants. But he also warns that the city itself is harmed if peasants are discouraged from bringing their produce to

market there. He warns that they might take their produce somewhere else (Ch31). One wonders what alternative there could have been to the market at Antioch. The warning gains force from the fact that Libanius wrote his pamphlet at a time when there had been a number of food crises in close succession (Ch35).

2 Implications for Economy and Municipal Government of Antioch in the Late Fourth Century

A few words about the general economic implications of this pamphlet. It is clear that the city of Antioch is in several respects prosperous. It has some very wealthy inhabitants who can afford to spend money on private building. But the city too is not poverty stricken. It owns landed estate from which it draws a considerable revenue, no doubt in rents paid by tenants. At the same time the city has the right, in Libanius' opinion, to call on the livestock on these land, the donkeys, mules and camels to be employed in public works. That these animals were not requisitioned was no doubt a favour to the city's tenants, who were evidently men of importance: influential *curiales* or *honorati*. We are not told what was being built for the city. We do however know that in the seventies the emperor Valens had given the city a new forum. We do not know how many years were spent on the construction of this work. It may be that work on it was still going on in 384/5 (Malalas XIII.338–39).

Even in the later 4th century building was still going on on the city's behalf. We are given very little detail of the organisation of building schemes. We are however told that shopkeepers were obliged to transport new pillars into the city for building projects. They were also obliged to perform the compulsory service of cleaning out the sewers of the city, dangerous work in the course of which men might choke to death. In practice the duty was essentially financial as far as shopkeepers were concerned: they were allowed to pay substitutes if they could afford it.¹

City councillors do not seem to have contributed voluntarily to public building as they had done in the days of the Early Empire.² It is however likely that individuals chosen from among leading councillors, (*principales*) had a role as supervisors of the work, and that it was these men that the governors favoured

1 Libanius, *Or.* XLVI.21.

2 It is likely that public building was generally initiated by imperial officials, and financed out of the third of civic revenues left to the city, together with compulsory payments by councillors: references in P. Petit, *Libanius et la vie municipale à Antioche*, Paris 1955, 318–20.

by allowing them to requisition the peasants' animals. In the contemporary *Or. xxx* Libanius complains about the unsuitable men appointed by the governor to supervise the bakers and to supervise the repair of a bridge (*Or. xxx.20*). Libanius wanted him to appoint a leading decurion called Letoius. The council itself appears to have had no role in the appointment of these functionaries, at least Libanius does not mention it in this connection. The arrangements for forced transport were made by the anonymous notables in charge of the work and the imperial governor. Redress could only come from the emperor.

3 Arrangements for the Disposal of Building Rubble at Rome and Elsewhere

Libanius insists that forced labour of the kind exacted from the peasants at Antioch was not exacted anywhere else and was being required without any legal justification. He seems to be right. There are plenty of laws dealing with forced labour on behalf of the state. I have found none requiring peasants to carry building rubble out of the city, not even when this has been produced by public works. When Julius Caesar made a regulation that heavy transport was banned from the city of Rome between sun rise and the tenth hour, he made an exception for waggons that brought building material for public building into the city and carried rubble out. But these waggons seem not have been requisitioned but to have belonged to contractors employed by the state (*Lex Julia Municipalis=tabula Heracleensis*, 56–61). We see that most waggons only entered Rome in the evenings and at night. They were not obliged to return the same night: Caesar's law allows waggons that have entered the city with a load during the night to remain until the tenth hour of the day, and it specifically states that this permission holds whether they are going to leave the city empty or carrying out "dirt" (*stercus*, *Lex M* 66–67). It follows that a lot of refuse or of excreta or indeed of both, for the word does not distinguish between the two classes of rubbish, was regularly taken out of the city in waggons pulled by oxen.

4 Reuse of Building Material

I would imagine that the problem of disposal of the material of demolished buildings was reduced by the fact that much of it was too valuable to be simply thrown away. It would simply be reused within the city. An eastern law of 397 orders that the material from demolished temples is to be used strictly

for the maintenance of roads, bridges and aqueducts (CT XV.1.40). In a law of 458 an indignant emperor states that men involved in public construction—and indeed men building privately too—are destroying existing buildings in order to be able to reuse their materials: “while it is pretended that stones are necessary for public works, the beautiful structures of ancient buildings are being scattered, and in order that something small may be repaired, great things are being destroyed” (*Nov. Maior.* 4). This practice goes back to the Early Empire.³

That the material of destroyed buildings was valuable is illustrated by another of the very few laws concerned with its disposal. *Digest* XXXLX.2.7 lays down that if a house collapses on to a neighbouring property it is the duty of the owner of the collapsed building to clear away the rubble from the land of his neighbour. But if he refuses to do so the neighbour may not sue him, provided he abandons all claim to ownership of the material (Gaius 381.38). If a neighbour allowed his house to fall down on to your property he was in a sense doing you a favour: he was presenting you with an asset.

5 Street Cleaning and Rubbish Disposal in Greek and Roman Cities

As we have seen Antioch did not have a municipal service for clearing building rubbish out of the city. This is not surprising. Keeping the streets clean and the city area free from rubble and rubbish was not normally a service provided by the civic governments of the Greco-Roman world. This does not mean that ancient authorities, Greek or Roman, were indifferent to the state of the streets, but only that they did not build up an organisation to perform the actual work of keeping the streets clean. As a rule responsibility for the care of the streets was an obligation imposed on the inhabitants of the street, while the authorities were content to appoint officials who would ensure that the inhabitants did their duty.⁴ Moreover the ancients did not separate the task of street-cleaning from other kinds of road maintenance. Much household rubbish left the house through the window at night. Juvenal advised people to make their will before venturing out at night in case a heavy piece of pottery thrown from a window falls on their head. You must pray that only the contents of the vessel will hit you (*Satire* 111.268ff).

³ *Lex Malacitana* 72, *L.Ursonensis* 75.

⁴ But Trajan assumed that in towns like Nicea and Nicomedia condemned criminals were employed in the baths, to clean drains and to pave streets (Pliny *Ep* x. 42, *solent enim ad balineum, ad purgationes cloacarum, item munitiones viarum et vicorum dari.*).

The result of this was a tendency for the level of the street to rise rapidly unless all these deposits were promptly taken away. This did not always happen. It has been estimated by Blegen that the ground level at Troy rose about 4.7 ft per century.⁵ An excavation at Athens has shown that the level of a street rose by more than half a meter between the late 5th century and the beginning of the fourth.⁶ One might perhaps expect the ground level of a city of brick and stone like Rome to rise more slowly than in one built of unburnt brick or timber and clay. Certainly it is clear that the ground-level rose much more quickly in built up areas of the classical towns during the dark ages than it had done in the classical period.⁷ But as far as road maintenance was concerned the effect of all this dumping was that rubbish removal was as much a matter of keeping the road passable and drained, as of removing waste that was insanitary or unsightly.

This is not the place to give a full account of the organisation of waste disposal in the city of Rome. This will be found in the chapter of Silvio Panciera.⁸ For the sake of comparison with the Greek world it will suffice to repeat the essential fact that at Rome responsibility for the cleaning and maintenance of the street outside his house (*curatio*, *Lex Municipalis* 32–49) rested on the owner or occupier. If he failed to do his duty the *aediles* or their subordinates the *quattuor viri vieis purgandis* would get the job done through contractors and charge the cost to the negligent owner. If he did not pay immediately the charge was doubled. The *aediles* attended to the state of the roads once a quarter, that is four times a year. In the interval a good deal of rubbish could

5 It has been estimated that if all the rubbish that is currently taken out of Manhattan were to remain in the city, the ground would rise at precisely the same rate as at Troy (Rathje, W. & Murphy, C., *The Archaeology of Rubbish*, New York 1992, 34–35. This is a curious coincidence. The “rubbish” of ancient Troy and that of modern Manhattan are surely quite different in kind. The rate at which urban ground level might rise would depend not only on the quantity of refuse, but even more on the durability of the building material of the houses.

6 Lalonde, G.V., “A triangular hieron south-west of the Athenian agora”, *Hesperia* 37, 1968, 123–33.

7 Eg the repeated raising of entrance—thresholds to keep up with rising street level illustrated in Ward Perkins, B., “The towns of northern Italy, rebirth or renewal?” in Hodges, R. & Hobley, B. eds., *The Rebirth of Towns in the West*, CBA Research Report 68, London 1988, 17–25, relevant p. 25, fig. 13.

8 See below.

accumulate.⁹ A stray dog is reported to have brought a human hand into the imperial dining room while Vespasian was having dinner.¹⁰

But to some extent, as E. Rodríguez-Almeida has explained,¹¹ the ancient city was “self-cleaning”. Dogs, pigs and other animals kept in the houses or running wild no doubt consumed what was edible. Whatever waste material could be reused in some way or other was reused. Scavengers and rag-and—bone men (Latin *scrutarii*) of various kinds no doubt picked up whatever was useful and could be sold, leaving only what was absolutely useless and disgusting. But some waste was not capable of being made use of and it was presumably the responsibility of the people who had produced it to get it moved out of the town. So around the southern side of the harbour town of Leptiminus in Africa Proconsularis (Tunisia) there is a crescent of dumped waste, mainly the useless residue of the manufacture of pottery and of metal working, even covering a cemetery.¹²

The arrangements in the Greek world were not essentially different from those found at Rome. Of course we have no Greek source to compare to the Codes of Roman Law. The most detailed Greek regulation to have been preserved is the law of the *astynomoi* of Pergamum.¹³ Highways must be at least 30 ft wide, others at least 12.¹⁴ It is the duty of property-owners to keep the road clear and passable, not only immediately outside their property but for a given number of *stadia*.¹⁵ It would seem that certain dumps were established where the householders were required to deposit their sewage. Groups of property owners collected money to hire a contractor who from time to time would carry the dumped waste out of the city.¹⁶ If private individuals obstruct part of a road and refuse to remove the obstructions, the *astynomoi* are to get a contractor to clear the road and to charge the disobedient individuals one

9 Papinius defined street cleaning as “reducing a street to its proper level by clearing away all that is upon it” (*Digest* XLIII.11.1.1).

10 Suetonius *Vesp.* 5.4.

11 Raventos and Remola, 2000, 123–127.

12 Oral information from D. Mattingly.

13 *SEG* XIII 521=*OGIS* 483; text and commentary by Klaffenbach, G., “Die Astynomeninschrift von Pergamon”, *Abh. Deutsch. Akad. Berlin*, 1953 no 6, publ. 1954. Oliver, J.H., *AJP* 52, 1951, 200; *Hesperia* 24, 1954, 88–92 argues for a Hadrianic date; J. & L. Robert *REG* 65, 1952, 171 n. 137 more plausibly for a Hellenistic date for the original enactment.

14 *OGIS* 483.25–30.

15 *Ibid.*, 30–32.

16 *OGIS* 483.79–84.

and a half times the cost.¹⁷ A humbler group of officials the *amphodarchai* are charged with seeking out persons who have thrown refuse on the street or used it to cut stones, make mortar, or even bricks, or who had dug cesspools and not covered them. The officials are to order the persons responsible to remove the forbidden matter or to cover the cesspool. In case they refuse, the work is to be done by contractors and the offenders charged as before.¹⁸ No one is allowed to water sheep in a public fountain or to wash clothes or anything else in them. Anybody who breaches the regulation is deprived of his sheep, or of his garments, and fined in addition.¹⁹ House owners also have the duty to keep cisterns water-tight and to prevent them from filling up with rubbish or soil. Proper maintenance of the cisterns was evidently of vital importance as the *astynomoi* were required to make an annual report to the *strategoï* of their state. Failure by the owners to maintain the cisterns properly is punished with a fine of 100 drachmas.²⁰

An inscription from Thasos records regulations for the cleaning and maintenance of a particular road which was on the route of a religious procession that attracted spectators. In this case the duty of maintenance was given to an individual, who was however compensated for his trouble by being allowed the use of a piece of land, the “garden of Heracles”.²¹ At Athens in the 4th century waste removal seems to have been organised rather like at Pergamon. It would seem that the Athenians, unlike the Thebans—as Euboulos the comic poet pointed out²²—carried their waste away from their houses to a dung heap (*kopron*), from which *koprologoï* collected it before carting it out of the city. Whether these men were public employees, or employees of private entrepreneurs, or humble individuals earning a scanty living for themselves, has been debated. The fact that in Aristophanes’ *Peace* the slaves of Trygaeus summon the *koprologoï* to remove the dung with which they had fed their master’s dung-beetle, suggests that they were humble individuals without official status.²³ Aristotle cites a regulation that certain officials, the *astynomoi* are to supervise the *koprologoï* and to prevent them from

17 Ibid., 36–51.

18 Ibid., 60–65.

19 Ibid., 160–90.

20 Ibid., 190–120.

21 Launey, M., *BCH* 61, 1937, 380–408; see also Vatin, C., “Jardins et services de voirie”, *BCH* 100, 1976, 555–64; Duchêne, H., *La stèle du port: fouilles du port 1: Recherches sur une nouvelle inscription thasienne*, Études Thasiennes XIV, Paris 1992. See also *BCH* 97, 1973, 75–106, and Lewis, D.M., *CR NS* 43 (1993) 402–3 & *SEG* 42, 785.

22 Euboulos in Athenaios x. 417J–E.

23 *Pax* 9.

dumping dung within 10 stadia of the city walls.²⁴ The *astynomoi* commanded a body of public slaves who had the duty of collecting dead bodies found lying in the street.

That the average street of classical Athens had a lot of rubbish lying on it is suggested by the existence of laws which prohibit the dumping of waste in specific places, for instance of animal dung on the *Hecatopedon* on the Acropolis,²⁵ or defecating in the agora or on the processional way in Piraeus.²⁶ We have already seen that the level of at least some Athenian streets rose quite rapidly.²⁷ The Eridanus stream at Athens was so polluted that it was unfit for cattle to drink.²⁸ It must have been irresistibly tempting to dump refuse inside the fortifications. So the walls of the Carian city of Aphrodisias carried a notice threatening any person who dumped his refuse inside the walls with the curse of the 318 fathers of Nicaea, as an enemy of God.²⁹

6 Sewers in Roman and Greek Cities

We associate sewers with the disposal of human waste, not so necessarily the Romans or the Greeks. Rome had an impressive system of drains and sewers which entered, and still enter, the Tiber through the Cloaca Maxima,³⁰ which was wide and deep enough to travel in by boat, as Augustus' son in law Agrippa did, and so doing demonstrated how successful his cleaning of the great drain had been. But the primary function of the Cloaca Maximus was to drain ground water from low-lying parts of the city like the forum, and rain water from streets. No doubt a lot of dirt from the streets was swept into it as well and many of the numerous public toilets³¹ drained into it. But the great

24 Aristotle *Ath. Pol.* 50; cf note in Rhodes, P.J., *Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia*, Oxford 1981, 574–75 & esp. Owens, E.J., “The duties of the *koprologoi* at Athens”, *CQ* 33, 1983, 44–56. I owe the latter reference to professor Stephen Mitchell.

25 *IG* I.3.4.

26 The interpretation of Vatin, C., “Jardins et services de voirie”, *BCH* 100, 1976, 555–64, relevant 557.

27 See above n. 4.

28 Strabo 397, IX.119.

29 *MAMA VIII*, ed. W.M. Calder & J.M.R. Cormack, Manchester 1962, n. 428.

30 Mainly on metaphorical use: Gower, E., “The Anatomy of Rome from Capitol to Cloaca”, *JRS* 85, 1995, 23–32.

31 Neudecker, R., *Die Pracht der Latrine*, zum Wandel der öffentlichen Bedürfnisanstalt in der kaiserlichen Stadt, Munich 1994.

majority of house toilets did not.³² Much domestic sewage went into cesspits. In places accessible to the general public there were rubbish pits,³³ where we are told a woman might abandon an unwanted baby, or find one to present to her husband as his and her own (Juvenal VI.602). But the function of Roman sewers, and the sophistication the Romans displayed in their design, has been described by G.M. Jansen.³⁴

Here I want to make the point that the possession of a sewer system was thought a characteristic of a Roman town, but much less so of a city of the Greek world, at least up to the 1st century AD. So Strabo could still write: "The Romans had the best foresight in those matters which the Greeks made little account of such as the construction of roads, and of the building of aqueducts, and sewers that could wash out the filth of the city into the Tiber. Moreover they have constructed roads throughout the country, making cuts through hills, and building embankments across valleys, so that their waggons can receive the load of boats. And water is brought into the city through aqueducts that flow through the city like veritable rivers, and through the sewers".³⁵ It is significant that Strabo links sewers and aqueducts. If water is brought into the city in an aqueduct there must be a sewer to take it out again.

At this time sewers and aqueducts were evidently much less common in the Greek world.³⁶ So when Strabo describes the important city of Smyrna,

32 See the important article: Scobie, A., "Slums, sanitation and mortality in die Roman world", *Klio* 88, 1986, 399–44, relevant 409, 413–17. Robinson, O.F., *Ancient Rome: City Planning and Administration*, London relevant 117–20. Bauer, H., in Steinby, E.M. (ed) *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, vol. 1, Rome 1993, sv *cloaca*, *Cloaca Maxima*.

33 Lanciani, R., *Ancient Rome in the Light of Recent Discoveries*, 1889, 64ff: 75 rubbish pits found on the Esquiline. Cesspits were the principal means of waste disposal in the Middle Ages. Platt, C., Coleman Smith, R., *Excavations in Medieval Southampton 1953*, Leicester 1975, vol. 1, p. 34 suggests development in three stages: 1. Cesspits scattered in an unsystematic way within and across the lines of contemporary building (12th cent.). 2. Cesspits restricted to open yards at rear or side of buildings (13th cent.). 3. Stone-lined cesspits. Cato as censor in 184 AD had some cesspits (*lacus*) lined with stone (Livius XXXIX.44).

34 Raventos and Remola, 2000, 31–49.

35 Strabo 235, v.3.8.

36 But the technology was originally Greek, with early ground-level aqueducts at Athens and at Samos, an aqueduct system from the fourth century at Priene, and a highly sophisticated system (2nd cent) at Pergamum, *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd Ed, sv *aqueducts* (Tomlinson, R.A. & Purcell N.) Oxford 1996, 133. Hodges, A.T., *Roman Aqueducts and Water-supply*, 1992; Hodge, A.T., ed., *The Future Currents in Hydraulic Studies*; Leeds 1991. Wilson, R.J.A., "Recent studies on Roman aqueducts and water supplies", *JRA* LX (1996), 5–30. The typical early Greek water supply was underground, perhaps to make

after mentioning the rectangular street pattern, the stone paved streets, two-storied porticoes, a library, and a harbour whose entrance could be closed, he adds “but there is one error, and that not a small one, of the architect in that when they paved the streets they did not give them underground drainage. Instead the filth covers the surface, particularly during rains when the refuse is discharged into the street”.³⁷ At Olynthus bowls attached to the walls of houses were used as latrines, and their contents were emptied through a pipe into the street or alley.³⁸ Seleucid foundations, such as Beroea and Apamea in Syria, as a rule had both water supply and drains.³⁹ Subsequently in many cities of the East the building of great baths and aqueducts under Roman patronage, or at least influence,⁴⁰ must have been accompanied by the provision of appropriate drains. But this did not necessarily mean a complete network of underground drains. On the south coast of Asia Minor Priene had both open and covered drains.⁴¹ At Side a covered drain ran along one side of the main colonnaded street, an open one along the other. At Perge an open canal ran along the main street from top to bottom.⁴² When Pliny the younger inspected Amastris on the Black Sea, he found that running along the length of a beautiful monumental street there was, what was called a river, but was in fact a filthy, stinking and unsightly sewer. The emperor gave permission to have the water course covered if it was a hazard to health, but left it to Pliny to find the money to pay for the work.⁴³

it less vulnerable to hostile attack when war was frequent, and also for cheapness, see Crouch, D.P., op. cit. n. 46 below. On water engineering in both the Roman and the Greek worlds see Tölle Kastenbein, R., *Archeologia dell'acqua, la cultura idraulica nel mondo classico*, Milan 1993.

37 646, XIV.1.37. According to A. von Gerkan, *Griechische Städteanlagen*, Berlin and Leipzig 1924, 28 comprehensive sewerage systems were still exceptional in Hellenistic times.

38 Robinson, D.M., & Graham, J.W., *Excavations at Olynthus* VIII, Baltimore 1938, 205–206, also Robinson, D.M., *Excavations at Olynthus* XII, Baltimore 1946, 163, 178–80.

39 Owens, E.J., *The City in the Greek and Roman world*, London 1991, 81. On sewer of Antioch see Libanius *Or.* XLVI.21.

40 In Macready, S. & Thompson, F.H., *Roman Architecture in the Greek World*, 1987: Waelkens, M., “The adoption of Roman building techniques in the architecture of Asia Minor”, 94–105 (more about baths and aqueducts than drains); Coulton, J.J., *Roman aqueducts in Asia Minor*, 72–84. Mitchell, S., *Cremna in Pisidia*, London 1995, 141–51 describes aqueduct built to feed baths.

41 Wiegand, T. & Schrader, H., *Priene*, Berlin 1904, 294ff, 74. A plan of drainage system in Crouch op. cit. n. 46 below, 162 fig. 12.7. Drains and drainage channels took waste water out through the walls on to fields which it might irrigate and fertilise or into the river.

42 Martin, R., *L'urbanisme dans la Grèce antique*, Paris 1956, 210.

43 Pliny *Ep.* x.98–99.

The relatively slow introduction of sewer networks into cities of the Greek world was not due to ignorance of the necessary building and engineering techniques: at Miletos a covered drain beneath a street has been dated to the 8th century BC.⁴⁴ But the purpose of the early drains seems to have been drainage rather sanitation.⁴⁵ The laying on of water supplies and the building of sewers must go together. In Greece the bringing of water into cities either by underground clay pipes or through rock-cut channels began early.⁴⁶ At Athens the beginnings of a sewer system go back to the time when the Peisistratids (6th cent) brought water to feed a fountain into Athens.⁴⁷ It was gradually extended into a system of sewers to carry away storm and waste-water.⁴⁸ The variety in the construction of the southern extension of the great drain of the 4th century, changing with the successive private plots through which it passed, suggests that responsibility for the building work was left to the various property owners.⁴⁹ Some householders connected their houses to the public drain.⁵⁰ But archaeology has also found evidence of domestic latrines draining into a covered cesspit either in the courtyard of the house or under the surface of the street in front of the house.⁵¹ The city of Rhodes founded in 409 BC received a complete system of drains as part of its original design. This was needed to prevent the rain-water from the hills overlooking the city causing an inundation.⁵² At Ephesus too the drains served to prevent flooding. By blocking them during a period of intense rain Lysimachus forced the citizens to move into the new town he had built for them in the neighbourhood.⁵³

44 Owens, E.J., *The City in the Greek and Roman World*, London 1991, 18 & 33.

45 So at Morgantina and Agrigentum in Sicily where the topography of the site made efficient drainage of rainwater essential: Crouch D.P., "The Hellenistic water System of Morgantina, Sicily", *American Journal of Archaeology* 88 (1984) 353–65, pl. 46–7; the same author "Water management at Agrigento and Morgantina", *Mitteilungen der Technischen Hochschule Braunschweig*, 103 (1989), 155–74.

46 Crouch, D.P., *Water Management in Ancient Greek Cities*, Oxford 1993.

47 Tölle-Kastenbein, R., *Das archaische Wasserleitungsnetz für Athen*, Mainz 1994, Crouch op. cit., 271–3.

48 Owens, E.J., op. cit. 24.

49 Young, R.S., "An industrial district of ancient Athens", *Hesperia* 20, 1951, 135–288, relevant 257–64.

50 Young, R.S., op. cit. 174–75, 199, 201, 205, 206, 213, 240.

51 Thompson, H.A., "Activities in the Athenian agora", *Hesperia* 28, 1959, 98–105.

52 Ibid., 59. Konstantinopoulos, G., "Rhodes, new finds and old problems", *Archaeology* 21 (1968), 115–23 and pl. 21.

53 Strabo 640, XIV.1.21.

7 **Legislation Concerning the State of the Streets. Keeping Public Spaces Public had a Greater Priority than Keeping them Clean**

Priorities of ancient municipal administrators are reflected in surviving legislation. Since the bulk of this is derived from the codifications of the emperors Theodosius and Justinian, and there is no corresponding Greek source, the legislation is overwhelmingly of the imperial age and Roman. But since Greek cities too were in this period supervised by the emperor's officials the legislation can be used as evidence for the Greek world as well. Summing up one might say that the aspects of street-care that concerned the Roman government and found expression in legislation were essentially two: the possibility that individuals might be damaged as a result of rubbish being thrown out of a window or otherwise deposited, and the danger that the road might be obstructed. The risk of damage to passers by is recognised in the Laws. *Digest* IX.3.5.1–2 and *ibid.* IX.3.1–7 regulate in detail the respective liability of owner, tenants and sub-tenants if someone walking below an apartment is injured by a liquid thrown from a window. There also is a full discussion of the compensation due to a passer-by who has been hit by an object falling from a window. If anything should be thrown out from a building onto a place where people commonly pass or stand about, the praetor will grant an action for double the damage caused as a result. If the falling object causes the death of a freeman he will grant an action for fifty aurei (IX.3.1). “When in consequence of the fall of one of these projectiles from a house, the body of a freeman shall suffer injury, the judge shall award to the victim in addition to medical fees and other expenses incurred in the treatment . . . the total of his wages of which he has been or shall be in future deprived by the inability to work which has ensued” (*Digest* IX.3.5.7). But merely cosmetic damage is exempted from compensation. “As for scars and disfigurements which may have resulted from such wounds, no damage can be calculated on this count, *for the body of a free man is without price*”.

Other regulations are concerned with obstruction. So officials are charged to ensure that nobody digs a hole in the street,⁵⁴ and that house-owners keep the street opposite their house in good repair. Shopkeepers and craftsmen are not to leave objects outside their shops, except that a fuller may leave clothes to dry and a carpenter is allowed to leave wheels outside his workshop. Officials are to stop anyone fighting in the street, and they are not to allow anyone to throw out dung or dead animals or skins (*Digest* XLIII.10.1.5). There were laws

54 *Digest* XLIII.10.1.2.

restricting the height of buildings, and laws to reduce the risk of fire, and to prevent owners partly or wholly demolishing buildings.⁵⁵

An aspect of urbanism that seems to have worried Roman emperors very much, and that produced more laws than any other urban topic, was the problem of private individuals building private structures on publicly owned land, or on public spaces. The land concerned included streets and colonnades and public places and markets (*fora*). Encroachment on such spaces was something which individuals tried to get away with through the whole imperial period. Even Justinian in the mid-sixth century was still legislating against this abuse. There seems to have been a conflict between the desire of the imperial and local governments to keep public land public, and the beautiful geometric pattern of streets intact, and the reality which was that encroachments could not be totally prevented. This was recognised by the authorities. *Digest* XLIII.17: If someone builds in a public place and nobody prevents him, he cannot be compelled to demolish, for fear of ruins disfiguring the city and because the interdict is for prohibition not restitution. *CJ* VIII.11.3 lays down that private buildings on public spaces that do not damage the city are to become property of the builders. The city ought to be grateful to the builder for embellishing it. This is a law of Julian the Apostate (c. 363), but it was included in Justinian's Code. Other laws instruct urban authorities to demolish private buildings on public land, for instances structures attached to the city wall, or built against some public building, or encroaching on a street or a public colonnade, are to be pulled down (*CJ* VIII.11.14 (396)) But even this does not lay down that all buildings on public land are to be pulled down. The laws seem to give the local authorities a legal basis if they wish to pull down particular constructions on public ground, rather than to initiate a campaign for ending such encroachments once and for all. Nevertheless it would seem that local and imperial authorities between them succeed in keeping the classical street pattern more or less intact as long as the system of municipal government continued to function. Failure to keep up the pattern which happened at different time in different areas of the Empire can be taken as an indication of the break down of the Roman administrative system.

55 On Roman building law: Robinson, O.F., *Ancient Roman City Planning and Administration*, London 1992, 43–8.

8 Ancient Attitudes in Perspective

That neither Rome nor Athens had a public service devoted to the disposal of rubbish is not surprising. Public rubbish collecting appears to be a fairly recent innovation. It was around the middle of the eighteenth century that American families began to dig refuse pits for their household rubbish, instead of just throwing it out of the windows and doors as the Romans did. "A hallmark of archaeological sites of the 17th century is the broadcast sheet of refuse that surrounds them. Apparently all the waste materials were simply shot out, and often at what to us would be an alarmingly short distance from the door... Pigs and chicken could eat what was edible".⁵⁶ Benjamin Franklin who started many things, instituted the first street cleaning service in the USA at Philadelphia in 1757. Even so in 1880 fewer than a quarter of America's cities could boast a municipally run system for disposing of garbage, though a further 19% contracted it out to private firms.⁵⁷ By 1910 eight cities out of ten had such a service.⁵⁸ George E. Waring Jr, street cleaning commissioner of the city of New York in 1895, set up the first comprehensive system of public garbage management in the USA. This means that his department of two thousand white clad employees, known as "white wings", not only cleared rubbish off the streets, but carted it off to dumps, burnt it in incinerators or dumped it in the Atlantic Ocean—whatever was the most appropriate. He did not as far as I know recycle, nevertheless an organisation of the kind he created was the direct predecessor of the environmentally conscious public health departments of today. It is evident that dirt and smell was not nearly as objectionable to the Romans as they are to us. Much domestic refuse might simply stay in houses. Stone floors and ornate mosaic pavements one might expect to be kept clean, but not so perhaps earthen or straw-covered floors, which from time to time were simply covered over with fresh earth or straw or hay. On the successive floor coverings of an army workshop in a fort at Vindolanda on Hadrian's wall an amazing collection of refuse has been found: food litter, all sorts of residue of leather manufacture, cast-off shoes and large numbers of pupae of stable flies which feed on urine and excreta. Clearly the Roman army was less concerned to keep its premises clean than a modern army would be.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Deetz, J., *In Small Things forgotten*, New York: Anchor Press 1977, 125–6.

⁵⁷ Melosi, M., *Garbage in the City: Refuse, Reform and the Environment 1880–1980*, Chicago 1981, table p. 31 & p. 153. But municipal street cleaning began earlier than municipal garbage collection.

⁵⁸ Rathje, W. & Murphy, C., *The Archaeology of Rubbish*, 1992, 42.

⁵⁹ Birley, R., *Vindolanda*, London 1977, 122–26.

This does not mean that for the ancients dirt was not objectionable at all. After all even many animals cover up their excreta if they have the opportunity. In human societies rituals of purification are aimed at supposed sensitivities of gods, who are thought to object to persons or objects that have been closely linked with death or birth or sex or excretion, and have become polluted by the contact.⁶⁰ But men would not attribute such susceptibility to their gods unless they also felt it in themselves, even if in dealings with other humans they show less consideration than in their dealings with gods. But in detail, what precisely is considered dirt, and even the strength of revulsion produced by different specimens of it, is socially determined, and varies from society to society, and from period to period. In Western society the concept of dirt and pollution has been separated from religion and become part of hygiene. In fact the extreme sensitivity of most of us to the sight and smell of excreta is a quite recent phenomenon, whose development can be observed in the gradual refinement of manners since the Renaissance.⁶¹ In the last hundred and fifty years or so our concept of dirt has been revolutionised by bacteriology.⁶² So it is not surprising that keeping the general public unembarrassed by the sight and smell of excreta did not have the same priority for administrators of Greek and Roman towns as it has had in Europe since the nineteenth century.

60 Parker, R., *Miasma*, Oxford 1983.

61 Elias, N., *The Civilising Process*, tr. by E. Jephcott of *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation*, Oxford 1978. This does not of course mean that the Romans were altogether indifferent to sewer-smells. Pliny's comment on the river/sewer at Amastris speaks for itself: *nomine quidem flumen, re vera cloaca foedissima, ac sicut turpis immundissimo aspectu ita pestilens odore taeterrimo. Quibus ex causis non minus salubritatis quam decoris interest eam contigi* (Ep x.98). Trajan agreed.

62 Douglas, M., *Purity and Danger, an analysis of the concepts of pollution and taboo*, London 1966, esp. 29–40 on “secular defilement”.

Was There a Crisis of the Third Century?*

Why is this question worth asking? Generations of historians have described the long series of troubles experienced by the Roman Empire in the third century as the *crisis* of the Empire, and have felt no doubt whatsoever that the word crisis was an appropriate description of what was happening to the Empire in that century. But today many scholars positively reject the application of this word to this period. Continuity is stressed. Transformation is the preferred term, even ‘anarchy’ is acceptable, but ‘crisis’ is out.¹ With at least the basic facts of the story undisputed, why is there such radical disagreement about how they are to be assessed?

When we look at the way the ‘forbidden’ word was used by earlier historians we note that it was used naively. The old *Cambridge Ancient History*, volume 12 of 1939 is entitled *The Imperial Crisis and Recovery, A.D. 193–324*, implying a crisis of 131 years, but chapter 6, written by Andreas Alföldi, under the title: ‘The crisis of the Empire (A.D. 249–270)’, implies a crisis of merely 21 years. But neither in the title of the volume, nor in the text of the chapters of Alföldi, is the word ‘crisis’ used in a precisely defined sense. Rather, it is employed in a broad sense, as a convenient, indeed obvious, word to describe a period filled with dangerous problems,² irrespective of whether you think of the period as a single long crisis, or as a succession of many crises. For depending on the temporal perspective, the word is equally suited to describe a single critical episode or a long succession of emergencies. It was certainly not proposed as an explicatory ‘model’, a technique which ancient historians did not employ in 1938.

The word ‘crisis’ appears again in the title of Ramsay MacMullen’s *Roman Government’s Response to Crisis A.D. 235–337*, published in 1976. MacMullen does not put forward a ‘model’ either. He uses the word ‘crisis’ as a convenient

* This article was previously published in *Crises and the Roman Empire*, in Proceedings of the Seventh Workshop of the International Network Impact of the Empire, eds. Olivier Hekster, Gerda de Kleijn, Danielle Slotjes, Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2007, pp. 11–20.

1 That is why L. de Blois (who still finds the word ‘crisis’ useful) thought it worthwhile to write ‘The crisis of the third century A.D. in the Roman Empire: a modern myth?’, in L. de Blois and J. Rich (eds.) *The Transformation of Economic Life under the Roman Empire*. Impact of Empire 2 (Amsterdam 2002), 204–217.

2 German: Epochenbezeichnung.

word to sum up a situation in which the strategies long used by the empire to preserve its existence proved totally inadequate, and chronic emergency forced the Roman government to innovate. The focus of the book is not on the 'crisis', but on the government's response to the challenge offered by it.

It was in the book of Geza Alföldy, *Die Krise des römischen Reiches, Geschichte, Geschichtschreibung, und Geschichtsbetrachtung: ausgewählte Beiträge* of 1989, that the concept of 'crisis' itself moved into the centre of the picture.³ Alföldy argues that individuals living through the disturbed years of the third century sensed that they were living in a period of 'crisis', that is through a period of drastic deterioration of many aspects of social life, with some individuals even going as far as to interpret their alarming experiences as foreshadowing the end of the world. Alföldy's argument is based to a very large extent on Christian texts, notably passages in the writings of Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen and Commodian, but also on verses of the eighth and thirteenth Sibylline oracles, which were composed in a tradition of Jewish apocalyptic writings. In addition he draws attention to some passages from the pagan historians Dio Cassius and Herodian, which convey an extremely gloomy view of contemporary Rome.⁴ So for Alföldy 'crisis' is the right word to describe the circumstances of the third century because crisis was what contemporaries thought that they were experiencing.

We now come to the 'enemies of crisis'. The opposition to the use of the word is comparatively recent. As far as I know, Karl Strobel's *Das Imperium Romanum im 3. Jahrhundert: Modell einer historischen Krise?*, published in 1993,⁵ was the first important study to take this line. Incidentally it was also the first book to consider that the word 'crisis' when applied to the third century, was not just a convenient description or an evocative metaphor, but a 'model',

3 This work by Alföldy is a collection of essays including 'The crisis of the third century as seen by contemporaries', *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 15 (1974), 89–111.

4 In fact Dio Cassius certainly thought that the death of Marcus Aurelius was a turning point in that the condition of the Romans from that point onwards descended from a golden to an iron age (73.36.4). The deterioration showed itself in the tyranny of successive emperors, and above all in the repeated breakdown of discipline in the army (see especially 80.4–5 on his own experience in 229 A.D.). There is no final and systematic assessment of the condition of the empire, perhaps because of the fragmentary state of the last books of the History, but I suspect that Dio Cassius did think that there was a chronic crisis of military discipline. This would not have been an objective assessment, though certainly one based on personal experience.

5 K. Strobel, *Das Imperium Romanum im 3. Jahrhundert*, (Stuttgart, 1993).

using the term rather loosely.⁶ His finding is that the model does not fit. But his book is not really aimed at any 'crisis model'. His approach is rather to discuss and, to his own satisfaction, refute the arguments of Geza Alföldy. His basic case is that the statements cited by Alföldy as evidence that contemporaries had reached the conclusion that they were living through a crisis of the Roman world, showed nothing of the sort. They merely record instinctive reactions to particular dangerous or threatening experiences. So the Christian texts are a response to the Decian persecution, which seemed to them to confirm the doctrine of the approaching end of the world and the subsequent second coming of Christ. Likewise the pessimistic utterances of Herodian and Dio Cassius reflect personal disappointments. Strobel argues that none of these testimonies expresses considered anxiety for the future of the empire. He also points out that by its very nature a crisis can normally only be recognized when it is over, and that this fact makes it unlikely that any Roman of the third century was in a position to diagnose a state of crisis.

Doubt whether Romans who had lived through most of the third century could in fact have reached the considered diagnosis that their society was passing through a crisis, does not rule out the possibility that a crisis had in fact occurred. Strobel addresses this issue also, but rather casually. He has not analyzed the events of the third century anything like as thoroughly as he has analyzed the texts discussed by Alföldy. He does however conclude that the events of the third century did not amount to a crisis. He even insists that, relatively speaking, the Roman world of the third century was a remarkably stable system.⁷ He goes as far as to reject even the description of what happened in the third century as "accelerated change" (*beschleunigter Wandel*) and concludes that "change, that is structural change" (*Wandel bzw. Strukturwandel*) is the appropriate term.⁸

In 1999, Christian Witschel produced a social and economic survey of the condition of the Roman world in the third century, synthesising not only literary but also archaeological evidence. He is not so much concerned with the history of emperors and political and military history, as with registering the

6 Strobel's problem is, "ob das '3. Jahrhundert' als Modell einer historischen Krise gesehen werden kann, also nicht nur in einer sachlichen Retrospektive des Historikers, sondern in der erlebten Gegenwart in der Geschichtswahrnehmung der Zeitgenossen." Strobel 1993, op. cit. (n. 5), 32.

7 "Aber selbst im Vergleich mit dem mittelalterlichen und dem neuzeitlichen Europa haben wir in der betrachteten Periode ein bemerkenswert stabiles System vor uns", Strobel 1993, op. cit. (n. 5), 347.

8 Strobel 1993, op. cit. (n. 5), 346–347.

condition of the different regions of the empire, and assessing the character and extent of change that took place in each during the course of the century.⁹ His investigation is extremely thorough, and would seem to present a fair summary of the current state of scholarly research. Throughout his investigation he emphasizes the great variety of the changes that took place in different parts of the empire, insisting that there were positive as well as negative developments. He agrees that the empire in the fourth century was in important ways significantly different from that of the second century, but he stresses that basic structures—such as the empire itself, the literary culture of the elite, the foundations of the economy and the essentials of life in cities and countryside—remained the same. He also points out that many of the developments of the third century can be shown to have their first origins in the second century. He is prepared to allow others to apply the concept of ‘crisis’ for the extensive troubles that affected the empire in the years 250/60 and 280/90,¹⁰ but this clearly is not what he thinks himself. His overall conclusion is that there was no overall crisis.¹¹ I think it is fair to say that Witschel thinks that generally speaking the concept of ‘crisis’ is one the historian of the third century can do without.

Reluctance to talk of crisis is more than the personal choice of a few individuals. It is a part of the intellectual atmosphere of the last twenty years or so. Volume 12 of the new edition of the *Cambridge Ancient History* still has a chapter “Maximinus to Diocletian and the ‘crisis’” But John Drinkwater, the author of this chapter, also notes that much recent work has taken the line that the word ‘crisis’ should not be applied to what happened in the Empire in the third century, and that the appropriate description is transformation and change.¹² This also seems to be the view taken by David Potter in his recent monumental *The Roman Empire at Bay A.D. 180–395*.¹³ He too sees history as

9 C. Witschel, *Krise, Rezession, Stagnation?: der Westen des römischen Reiches im 3. Jahrhundert n. Chr.* (Frankfurt am Main 1999), 24: “Insgesamt gesehen erscheint mir das römische Reich vom 2./1. Jh. bis zum 5./6.Jh. geprägt durch ein recht stabiles Gesamtsystem”.

10 Witschel 1999, op. cit. (n. 9), 375.

11 Witschel 1999, op. cit. (n. 9), 377, “Das römische Reich sah also im 4. Jh. an nicht wenigen Punkten anders aus als im 2. Jh. Viele dieser Veränderungen betrafen eher Äußerlichkeiten, während die politischen, sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Grundstrukturen in einem bei der Schwere der militärischen Probleme im 3. Jh. erstaunlichen Umfang erhalten blieben”. Whether we see these changes as superficial or profound is of course a matter of perspective.

12 J. Drinkwater, *CAH*² 12, 28–66, relevant 64.

13 D.S. Potter, *The Roman Empire at Bay A.D. 180–395* (London 2004). The book includes a very detailed narrative history of the third century, which in many ways complements

a process of gradual change and transformation.¹⁴ So also Averil Cameron: “these days scholars (...) will not be concerned with crisis, but rather with the myriad changes on the ground that coincide with the passing of centuries”.¹⁵

Light on the reasons for this widespread rejection of ‘crisis’ is thrown by another sentence of Averil Cameron: “There is a kind of consensus today that the concept of crisis is somehow no longer appropriate, and that instead we should use terms which are relatively value-free, such as ‘change’ or ‘transformation’”.¹⁶ The word ‘crisis’ is rejected because it is not thought to be value free, because it is thought judgemental. Strobel makes essentially the same point. In his view, even a naïve application of the term crisis to the circumstances of the third century involves both preconceptions (*Vorgaben*) and value-judgements (*Wertungen*), and both of these are bound to have a distorting effect on the interpretation of the evidence.¹⁷ In other words the use of ‘crisis’ offends because it is taken to be an example of judgementalism,¹⁸ a state of mind the condemnation of which is deeply rooted in contemporary academic culture of the English speaking world, and in northern Europe generally.

Why the concept of ‘crisis’ should be considered ‘judgemental’ and therefore ‘politically incorrect’, is not at all obvious. After all the resolution of a medical crisis, or indeed any other crisis, need not result in the patient’s condition becoming worse. The crisis might be resolved with the affected subject being destroyed, or weakened, but also with its being restored to its previous condition, or even becoming stronger. The metaphor captures the magnitude and climacteric character of the danger, not the ‘goodness’ or ‘badness’ of its

the social and economic history of Witschel. Unlike Witschel, Potter does not discuss the relevance of general concepts, but generally speaking the concept of ‘crisis’ has no place in his history, except in a very limited descriptive sense as for the tide of the chapter on the consequences of the murder of Commodus.

14 It could however be objected that the ‘The Empire at Bay’ in his tide might be thought to be almost interchangeable with ‘the empire in crisis’.

15 Averil Cameron, ‘The perception of crisis’, in *Settimane di studio del centro italiano sull’alto medioevo* 45 (1998), 9–31, citation is on 31. A related view is expressed in P. Horden and N. Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea, a Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford 2000), 339, “Mediterranean historiography should attempt to forego the luxury of the vision of the past in which differences can readily be explained by pointing to major, sudden, discontinuities”. But theirs is an ecological history, which is not quite the same.

16 Cameron 1998, op. cit. (n. 15), 10.

17 Strobel 1993, op. cit. (n. 5), 346–47.

18 On this tendency see my ‘Late Antiquity, and the rejection of “decline”, and multiculturalism,’ *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 45 (2001), 1–11 (= *Decline and Change in Late Antiquity* (Aldershot 2006), no. XVII).

resolution.¹⁹ But if many Roman historians today assume that to describe the condition of the Roman empire in the third century as undergoing a ‘crisis’ is equivalent to condemning the empire that emerged from the crisis as inferior, this is explicable from the historiography of the subject.

Since the Renaissance, classical Greek and Roman literature, art and politics were seen as uniquely valuable examples, and were upheld as such in the schools and universities of Europe. But this exemplary classical culture seemed to have ended around the turn of the second century. That is why what came after was characterized by Edward Gibbon as “decline and fall”, and as “senile decay of classical life and culture” (*Alterung des Antiken Lebens und seiner Kultur*) by Jacob Burckhardt.²⁰ In this perspective, the numerous troubles of the third century could be seen as the ‘crisis’ which had set classical civilization on its fatal downward path. A most influential exposition of this view was Mikhail Rostovtzeff’s *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, first published in 1926. Rostovtzeff interpreted the events of the third century in the light of the Russian revolution, and argued that the instability of the third century was essentially a class war in which the peasantry, represented by the army, fought against and confronted the middle and upper classes, and destroyed them and their culture.

The reader of Rostovtzeff’s book is led to the conclusion that the third century and its crisis, or crises, more or less finished Roman civilization. In fact however Rostovtzeff was mistaken. The famous last chapter is historically the weakest part of his great work, but the idea that ‘crisis’ necessarily involves decline has remained, and since today for many of our colleagues ‘decline’ has become a dirty word, so has crisis.²¹ In fact quite a lot of Witschel’s case against ‘crisis’ is made up of arguments that neither at the start of the third century nor at its end was the condition of the empire weaker or inferior to what it had been in the first two centuries.²²

Whether this is right or not, the fact remains that the word crisis clearly and compactly sums up a good deal of what happened in the third century. Among

19 The mere act of diagnosing the presence of disease might—I suppose—be considered a value judgement.

20 J. Burckhardt’s title of chapter 7 in, *Die Zeit Konstantins des Grossen* (Leipzig 1852).

21 Cf. the rejection of ‘catastrophe’ in Purcell and Horden 2000, op. cit. (n. 15), 339: ‘The relatively frequent repetition of events studied—their normality—makes us want to associate ourselves with those who are reluctant to use the notion of catastrophe’.

22 Witschel 1999, op. cit. (n. 9), 375, “Auf keinen Fall war das Gesamtreich bereits um 200 von einer (Vor-)Krise erfaßt”, and 376, “Zahlreiche Kontinuitätslinien konnten durch diese global gesehen nur recht kurze Phase der Schwäche und Unsicherheit nicht nachhaltig gestört werden”.

the synonyms for the word crisis listed in the Oxford Compact Thesaurus are 'disaster', 'emergency', 'danger' and 'turning point'. There can surely be no argument that in the third century the Roman Empire faced situations of danger, emergency and disaster extremely frequently. For the first time in its existence it had to fight major wars on its eastern and western frontiers at the same time. There was an endless succession of usurpations. For some time it looked as if Gaul and the eastern provinces might break away into separate empires. There was serious inflation. The huge rise in prices following Aurelian's coinage reform can hardly be described as anything else than a currency crisis.²³ There were outbreaks of plague. Hardly anybody, not even Witschel, would deny, that the years 260–280 were years of extreme danger for the empire as a whole, so there is no reason why they should not be described as years of crisis. But the term could be just as properly applied to every one of the century's usurpations. Indeed the entire period from the murder of Alexander Severus to the rise of Constantine might be treated as a single, sustained crisis of the imperial office. It is in fact difficult to avoid using the term.

It is true that the empire survived and recovered. But it did so only with great effort.²⁴ In the course of the struggle a number of institutions and practices which had been basic to the functioning of the early empire were transformed. I might mention first of all the changed appearance of many city centres, and the great reduction in the use of civic inscriptions and of monuments commemorating public figures.

I have argued elsewhere that this is much more than a matter of fashion, but represents a profound transformation of the mentality of civic elites,²⁵ whose support had made it possible to administer a very large empire with very few paid officials. Then the city of Rome ceased to be the centre of the empire, and the Roman senate lost its place as the empire's deliberative assembly. Moreover

23 M. Corbier, *CAH*² 12, 425.

24 Drinkwater is surely right to stress that the Romanisation and consequent coherence of the elite over wide stretches of the empire was a principal reason why the empire did not fall apart. See *CAH*² 12, 63, and *The Gallic Empire: Separatism and Continuity in the North-western Provinces of the Roman Empire A.D. 260–274* (Stuttgart 1987), especially 125–131, on the Roman character of the Gallic Empire.

25 Witschel 1999, op. cit. (n. 9), 376, "...allgemeines Unsicherheitsgefühl, so daß auch in nicht direkt von äußeren Eingriffen bedrohten Gebieten für eine Weile nur wenig Aktivitäten entfaltet wurden", is to my mind a totally inadequate explanation, as I have argued in 'Transformation and decline: are the two really incompatible?', in J.-U. Krause and C. Witschel (eds.), *Die Stadt in der Spätantike—Niedergang oder Wandel?* (Stuttgart 2006), 463–483, at 464. See also my *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City* (Oxford 2001), 11–19.

it became clear that the empire needed more than one emperor. Finally the traditional religion ceased to be taken for granted, and at the end of this period the emperor could afford to abandon and even persecute it. The abandonment of long established cults surely does reflect a change of mentality that is very profound indeed.

The word crisis implies that the dangerous pressure builds up to a climax, a decisive turning point. Difficulties of the empire in the third century built up to several climaxes, which were resolved in a succession of turning points. Nevertheless we can isolate a remarkably short span of time within which large areas of traditional civic behaviour disappeared. It was, by and large, in the years 240–250 that all over the empire the construction of monumental building and the setting up of new commemorative inscriptions (including—and this is surely significant—dedications to gods) very nearly stopped, never to be resumed on anything like the old scale. Of course if you search all over the Empire, and over decades of time, you will find exceptions to this development, and the transformation was not equally complete all over the Empire. The process was geographically and chronologically very uneven, but by and large the disappearance of evidence for monumental commemorations of civic patriotism and civic religion is far more striking than the exceptions. As far as visible remains are concerned, the period 240–250 marks the end of the early empire.

I have argued that the word crisis is an appropriate description of what happened to the Roman Empire in the third century. This does not mean that Witschel and others who have assembled evidence for gradual change and transformation are wrong. History is after all a continuous process. One development leads to another. There never is a complete break. Any significant change in society can be shown to be the result of a chain of cause and effect going back a long time. So it is not at all surprising that Witschel is able to show that many features of the empire of the fourth century have their roots in the empire of the early third, or late second, or even earlier centuries. But to insist that the historian must restrict himself to observing gradualness is bound to produce a misleading picture. It seems to me at least that both Strobel and Witschel have consistently minimized the traumatic nature of much of the third century,²⁶ as well as the magnitude and significance of the changes involved in the restoration of stability.²⁷ Emergency and catastrophe are important aspects of the historical process, and Hekster, de Kleijn and

26 See above the generalization of Strobel cited in n. 7.

27 See above the generalizations of Witschel cited in nn. 11 and 26.

others, 2007, contains numerous examples of the serious and lasting damage caused by the civil wars and invasions of the third century.²⁸

To argue that 'crisis' is the right word to describe the many emergencies of the third century, is not to propose the word as a 'model'. Keith Hopkins defined the term 'model', as it is used by sociologists, as the simplification of a complex reality, designed to show the logical relationships between its constituent parts. Models allow us to construct whole pictures, into which the surviving fragments of ancient source material can be fitted.²⁹ I do not think there could be a 'crisis model' in Hopkins' sense. The word crisis covers far too wide a range of critical situations. If one wants to construct a model one has to be more specific. One can construct a model of the Principate, which will help to explain the crisis of the imperial office.³⁰ Marx constructed a model of ancient society founded on slavery. According to this model the troubles of the third century represent a crisis of a slave owning society. Rostovtzeff's treatment of the third century involves the use of a Marxist model against Marx, a class war model. A model that would satisfactorily demonstrate the logical relationship between the different phenomena that constitute our knowledge of the third century would have to be a model of the structure of the empire. It would not be a 'crisis model'.

To assert that there was a crisis, or a succession of crises, in the third century is in the first place an act of description. How far the blood and tears of a 'crisis' can work as a discrete *cause* remains an open question. If we look at our own time, nobody would deny that the 1914–1918 war could properly be described as a crisis, perhaps a crisis of the European nation-states.³¹ But does that mean that it forced the development of Europe in a direction it would not otherwise have taken? Would the central European monarchies have survived without it? Would there have been no Russian revolution, no great depression? Or would the eventual outcome have been the same, only arrived at more slowly? One can similarly ask whether the prolonged and intensifying crisis of the third century was the principal reason why there is so conspicuous a difference

28 The bias of Strobel and Witschel and other opponents of crisis is of course an example of the contemporary intellectual tendency which prefers to treat the end of the empire without any reference to catastrophe or decay, and even tends to imply that the Roman world never came to an end at all. See B. Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization* (Oxford 2005), especially 1–10 and 182–83.

29 K. Hopkins, 'Rome, taxes, rents and trade', in W. Scheidel and S. von Reden, *The Ancient Economy* (Edinburgh 2002), 190–230, at 191–92.

30 See the article of J. Drinkwater in Hekster and others, *Crises and the Roman Empire*, 67–74.

31 Even though in most of Europe the basic social institutions survived the Great War, just as many basic institutions of Roman society survived the third century.

between the classical Roman world and the world of the fourth century?³² Is it conceivable that without the crisis of the third century there would have been no Late Antiquity, or would Late Antiquity have arrived all the same, only later?

32 R. MacMullen 1976, *Roman Government's Response to Crisis, A.D. 235–337* (New Haven, 1976), vii: "He (the historian) emerges into a gradually clearing light, but into a different country—as if he had entered the depths of Monte Bianco and discovered an exit from Mont Blanc". This of course is hyperbole. But general acceptance that the world of the later empire is in many important respects different has generated the idea of Late Antiquity.

Transformation and Decline: Are the Two Really Incompatible?*

By the mid third century the classical city was under pressure everywhere. Instead of individuals being eager for the honour of membership in the city council, many existing councillors now sought to escape from the *curia*. The imperial government issued a stream of legislation to prevent existing councillors from leaving. There was fear of invasion and cities all over the Empire, some sooner, some later,¹ received fortifications.² In many cities in many regions, particularly in the West, the new walls enclosed a smaller area than that which had been covered by the classical city. Christianity became first the religion of the emperor, then of the Empire, and in time the appearance of cities came to be dominated by churches. The bishop became more important than any secular local official. These were important and fundamental changes which did not happen everywhere at the same time, but eventually did happen everywhere. When, and why they happened, and how radically they affected the character of the cities was discussed at the conference, and is central to the theme of the transformation of the Roman world. Underlying much of the discussion is the question of how far and in what sense the concept of *decline*, which was memorably linked to the history of the fall of the Roman Empire by Edward Gibbon in the title of his book, remains useful to day.³

The Evidence of Inscriptions and Papyri

Reconstruction of any history must start with an evaluation of the evidence. From this point of view Christian Witschel's chapter on the 'epigraphic habit'

* This article was previously published in *Die Stadt in der Spätantike-Niedergang oder Wandel?*, eds. J.-U. Krause & C. Witschel, *Historia Einzelschrift* 190, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2006, pp. 463–483.

1 The date of Late Antique fortifications is in many cases still quite uncertain.

2 In the East: Crow 2001; Gallic walls: Loseby above 75–80.

3 My views on this question: Liebeschuetz 2001a, 1–11; 2001b; 2003. They have been criticised, most fully in Cameron 2003; Whittow 2003.

is basic.⁴ Much of our knowledge of the functioning of the classical city is derived from inscriptions. But, as Witschel's discussion of late Roman inscriptions in the province of *Venetia et Histria* shows, the third century saw a transformation of the character of epigraphic commemoration. Inscriptions continue, less abundantly than previously, but still, as is demonstrated in an appendix to the chapter, in very considerable numbers.⁵ But at the same time inscriptions now provide us with very little evidence on municipal careers and municipal institutions. They continue to throw some light on the activities of provincial governors, but above all they become a principal source of evidence for the progress of Christianity.⁶ More or less⁷ the same transformation can be observed at more or less the same time in most regions⁸ of the Empire. The interpretation of the change in the use of inscriptions is therefore of fundamental importance, as it must affect our view of civic development all over the Empire.

The great question is whether the change in the epigraphic habit represents a profound change in the political culture of the cities (as I have argued),⁹ or whether it should be seen as something more superficial, that is as the adoption by the leaders of civic society of new fashions to satisfy their continuing need for self-representation.¹⁰ At this point it is perhaps relevant to ask whether the concept of self-representation provides an adequate description of the use of inscriptions in the classical city. Yes, the setting up of an inscription was an act of self-representation by the individual or the group that had itself commemorated but it was also an act of communication with fellow citizens, and we must not ignore what was being communicated and where.¹¹

4 See C. Witschel, in Krause & Witschel 2006, 359–411.

5 See C. Witschel, in Krause & Witschel 2006, 382.

6 See C. Witschel 2006, 359–81, esp. 375–380.

7 The imprecise language is deliberate. The reader of this volume cannot fail to observe considerable regional and chronological differences, but to my mind the similarities are much more striking than the differences.

8 The most striking exception is Africa, where the epigraphic habit in its classical form revived in the fourth century and persisted to the end of the century and even a little beyond, cf. the abundant material in Lepelley 1981.

9 Liebeschuetz 2001a, 11–19.

10 For the model of a new 'Selbstdarstellungsbedürfnis', see C. Witschel 2006, 373–375.

11 A milestone, for example, does not communicate the same message as a career inscription, and it does make a significant difference whether a member of the élite chooses to present himself to the general public as one who has done the community some service, or as a wearer of expensive clothing.

Peter van Minnen raises similar problems in connection with the Egyptian papyrological evidence. On the basis of a comprehensive survey of the papyrus documentation that has come 'down to us from Late Antiquity he shows that there is great variation both in the number and the character of documents surviving from different centuries.¹² Numerous civic documents have reached us from the third and fourth centuries, but much fewer from the fifth and sixth centuries. The fifth century has left us altogether far fewer papyri than either the fourth or the sixth. Of the papyri of the sixth century a disproportionate number are derived from the estates of the Apion family. Before proceeding to reconstruct the development of late Roman cities it is therefore necessary to assess whether a change in the papyrological evidence does indeed reflect changes in Egyptian society, or whether it is only a result of the accidents of survival.

The Cities Transformed

In Gaul cities lost much of their classical monumentality as early as the third or fourth centuries. But Simon Loseby has shown us that the city remained a fundamental organising principle in Gaul even under the Merovingians.¹³ For the Merovingian kingdom was an association of *civitates* under a royal administration rather than a unitary kingdom. In Late Antiquity the number of cities actually increased, because, as Jean Guyon reminds us, a number of settlements that had been *vici* received bishops, and thus became cities.¹⁴ But there had been much change too. The urbanised centres were much smaller in area, and more untidy in lay-out, and they had fewer inhabitants. Walls, which might well be monumental, enclosed an episcopal complex, a few churches and the residence of the count, and often did not leave very much room for ordinary housing. Outside the walls were funerary basilicas, and monasteries. The importance of suburbs clearly varied from city to city, but archaeological evidence is still quite insufficient to form a picture of the extent of habitation beyond the wall except for a few cities.¹⁵ Furthermore the Frankish magnates, like the late Roman magnates whom they succeeded, and with whom they eventually came to form a single class, were countrymen who spent most of

¹² See Van Minnen 2006, 153–179.

¹³ See Loseby 2006, 67–104, also Loseby 2000.

¹⁴ See Guyon 2006, 106f.

¹⁵ See Loseby 2006, 78f.

their lives on their estates, and not in cities.¹⁶ They were important, but our literary sources—being mainly ecclesiastical—tell us very little about them.¹⁷ Guyon, like Marrou before him, characterises the process as change rather than decline, but he has adopted Marrou's maritime metaphor, of ebb-tide (*étiage*), to describe the condition of the Gallic cities in Late Antiquity.

Incidentally I wonder whether by seeing these changes simply in terms of the survival and transformation of the classical city, we miss something specifically Gallic, in that the Gallic *civitas* with an urban centre remained an important administrative institution in Merovingian Gaul,¹⁸ as it did not, or not nearly to the same extent, in Italy or Hispania.¹⁹ Hispania lies next to Gaul and invites comparison. But this is more difficult than appears at first sight because we know so much less about Hispania, and generalisations about it are much more uncertain. One might expect the development in Spain to be similar to that in Gaul, and to some extent this is true. But perhaps the differences are more interesting. In Hispania the monumental structures of the classical city seems to have gone into decline considerably later than has long been assumed, and perhaps a century later than in Gaul. The real decline seems to have been a feature of the fifth century, at least in the larger cities, as Michael Kulikowski demonstrates.²⁰

Bishops of course came to be extremely important in Visigothic Hispania, but the Christianisation of town centres was again a comparatively late (i.e. 5th-century) phenomenon.²¹ Eventually there were 82 bishops, each based in a city, and they played an even more direct part in the administration of the Visigothic kingdom than their colleagues played in Merovingian Gaul. On the other hand the Hispanic bishops we know best, those of Mérida, were unlike many bishops of Merovingian Gaul in that they were not descendants of the Roman senatorial nobility. The Visigothic monarchy instituted an administration that was very Roman; at least that is the impression given by the Visigothic Code of Laws, but these laws are very rarely concerned with cities. To judge by the area enclosed by circuits of late Roman walls, cities of Hispania with a few exceptions were even smaller than those of late Roman Gaul.²² Moreover

16 The extent of ruralisation of the leaders of society in Gaul remains a problem.

17 On the secular elite, see Loseby 2006, 86–92.

18 See Loseby 2006, 84–86.

19 The process of disintegration of the city-territories of the Roman age happened in Gaul too, but more slowly. See Fixot 2000 and Gauthier 2000.

20 See Kulikowski 2006, 129–149; cf. also Arce 2004.

21 See Kulikowski 2006, 140f.

22 Fernández Ochoa/Morillo 1991 and 1992.

the evidence suggests that cities continued to shrink throughout the Visigothic period.²³

It is likely that the role of the *civitates* in Visigothic Spain was less important than it was in Merovingian Gaul, and that the king's direct relation with great landowners was more important.²⁴ The huge late Roman villas were perhaps an alternative to the cities.²⁵ In many respects, notably law, administration and epigraphy, Visigothic Spain remained very Roman. But while the bishops of Merovingian Gaul produced a rich Christian literature of sermons, letters, lives of saints, and of course the remarkable writings of Gregory of Tours, Spanish bishops have left very few writings of this kind. But then again, very few writings of any kind have reached us from classical Spain.²⁶

In Italy the classical ideal of the city lasted longer than in the provinces further west: during the fourth century many cities preserved their monumental centres. Conservation of civic centres became difficult during the troubles of the fifth century, but the *curiae* nevertheless continued to take a leading part in government, right up to the middle of the sixth century, and in some cases even beyond. Money was no longer spent on new monumental secular building; but it was still spent in large amounts on churches.²⁷ Giovanni Cecconi examines the interaction of civic and imperial administration and concludes that the view which has been generally accepted in the past, and indeed maintained by myself,—namely that the presence of imperial officials made the work of *curiales* and civic magistrates unattractive and hazardous, and by producing a flight from the councils, fatally damaged both *curiae* and cities—can be shown to be wrong for at least some cities in Italy, where the presence or proximity of a governor actually assisted the efforts of the city's *curiales*, so that the city and its *curia* benefited from his presence. Federico Marazzi shows how Capua and Canusium actually benefited from becoming provincial capitals. Milan and Ravenna expanded as a result of being residences of the emperor. Aquileia and many regions of northern Italy benefited from the shift of the

23 See Keay 2003, esp. 203–206 on the transformation of late Roman townscapes. At Tarragona much of the lower city was abandoned in the late 4th century; see Carreté/Keay/Millett 1995, 36. In Catalonia of 20 urban sites only 4 (Tarraco, Barcino, Ilerda, Girona) can be proved to have continuity into the Middle Ages, 6 others recovered urban life, but only after having been reduced to the condition of a village (Ampurias, Baetulo, Egara, Roses, Dertosa, Iluro). On the fate of cities in general, see Gurt 2000/01.

24 Diaz 2000; see also Ripoll/Velázquez 1999 and Keay 2003, 206–209.

25 For recent work on villas (including villas in Hispania) see Chavarría/Lewit 2004.

26 The classical Latin authors from Hispania, notably the two Senecas and Martial, seem to have written the works we know at Rome.

27 Ward-Perkins 1984.

centre of the imperial government to the north.²⁸ It cannot therefore be said that the closeness of agents of the central administration inevitably resulted in the decline of the cities. Nor is it true that Christianisation of cities necessarily lead to the replacement of secular by ecclesiastical administration. By founding churches and monasteries secular magnates could actually strengthen their authority.

Cecconi argues that the *honorati* whom we find increasingly in charge of cities from the fifth century onward were for the most part *curiales* who had performed their curial duties before acquiring senatorial rank and subsequently returned to the *curiae* and the service of their cities.²⁹ On this view there was no split in the civic elite, and no significant difference either in outlook or in effectiveness between curial and post-curial government. Cecconi concludes that the system of municipal government remained stable until the calamities of Justinian's war of liberation in the mid-sixth century, when cities and imperial administration failed together. This interpretation leaves scope for discussion.³⁰

In a book that has become a classic, Claude Lepelley has shown how in Africa the classical government of cities by *curiales*, together with inscribed monuments, and well-maintained or even newly constructed civic buildings, survived the crisis of the third century better and longer than anywhere else in the West, indeed up to the first decade of the 5th century.³¹ One aspect of this was that at Carthage the games, above all chariot racing and wild beast hunts, continued to be held in the hippodrome and the amphitheatre even after the Vandal conquest, right through the fifth century and beyond, long after they had ceased in most of the cities in the West, though their organisation was in some ways peculiarly African.³² The Vandal invasion caused many members of the elite to lose their land to the invaders. No doubt other changes followed too, including perhaps the slow beginning of the decline of cities. But since the classical epigraphic habit had largely come to an end even in Africa by the second quarter of the fifth century, we really still know very little about the chronology of the decline. For instance very many ruins of churches have survived from Roman North Africa, which might tell us a lot about the Christianisation

28 See Marazzi 2006, 33–65; Cecconi 2006, 285–318.

29 See Cecconi 2006, 301.

30 See Liebeschuetz 2006, 470–472.

31 Lepelley 1979/81, cf. also Lepelley 2001.

32 See Beschtaouch 1977.

of North Africa, as well as about its rapid reversal, if only more of the churches could be dated.³³

Leppelley has shown that in North Africa the process of decline of the cities was very gradual, that it affected some regions more than others, and that it became dramatic only as late as the late sixth or even the early seventh century.³⁴ The total abandonment of some of the sites may be much later still. Some regions of North Africa certainly saw a boom under the Arabs.³⁵ But it remains a fact that many cities eventually did come to an end, particularly in the inland regions. These are the cities whose Roman remains have been so well preserved, and they have been preserved precisely because the sites had ceased to be inhabited. It also seems certain that Christianity weakened much faster in North Africa than in the Arab Near East. But we still know very little about the chronology of the process. Wars with the Berbers may have been a contributory factor. But as Lepelley points out, Berber wars cannot provide a complete explanation.

In the cities of the East the third century marks less of a turning point than in the West. The appearance of cities changed much less. By and large the eastern cities shrank neither in area nor in population until the second half of the sixth or even the early seventh century. On the contrary, in parts of the East especially in Syria, Palestine and Arabia cities expanded, as shown by Stephan Westphalen.³⁶ One consequence of this was that the urban violence, which Michael Whitby³⁷ has discussed, remained a widespread and indeed a growing problem in the cities of this area, as it did not in the West. The explanation of factional violence remains problematical. I explained the faction riots as an expression of growing popular discontent as a consequence of the administration by notables becoming less transparent and less answerable to the population than administration by the *curiales* had been, and suggested that the factions' strength and resilience depended ultimately on widespread popular support.³⁸ Whitby has put forward plausible arguments against my position. The difficulty is that while we have quite full descriptions of the

33 See Mattingly/Hitchner 1995, esp. 209–213 on Africa in Late Antiquity.

34 Lepelley 1979/81. One might say that the development of cities in Byzantine North Africa is more like the development in Asia Minor than in Spain, Gaul or in Italy.

35 Cf. Thébert/Biget 1990.

36 See S. Westphalen 2006, 181–197; cf. also Jones Hall 2004.

37 See Whitby 2006, 441–446.

38 Liebeschuetz 2001a, 249–257.

riots,³⁹ we have very little evidence directly bearing on the underlying social circumstances.

In the East secular monumental buildings were still being reconstructed or even built from scratch in some cities as late as the sixth century. But by then new construction was mainly of churches. The building of churches started quite slowly and became widespread only from the late fourth century. In the sixth century many regions of the East saw the building of numerous churches.⁴⁰ In the large villages on the fringes of the Arabian deserts churches seem more often than not to have been founded by private individuals, and to be closely associated with specific blocks of houses. It looks as if the foundation of churches here as elsewhere was exploited by individuals and family groups to increase their prestige and influence in local society.⁴¹

Asia Minor is full of ruined cities, many of them extremely impressive. Contemporary scholars are steadily increasing our knowledge of the history and archaeology of these sites. One might mention the work of Wolfgang Brandes, Clive Foss, Stephen Mitchell, Mark Whittow, Klaus Rheidt, and Charlotte Roueché among many others.⁴² It is clear that this area flourished through much of Late Antiquity. But many problems remain. Urbanisation certainly went into sharp decline in the seventh century, but when did this decline start? Did it start everywhere at the same time, or at different times in different areas? And how is it to be explained? Was it principally the Persian invasion and the Arab raids that ruined the urban system of Asia Minor, or can natural causes, plague and earthquakes, and perhaps climatic change, also be shown to have made a significant contribution to the running down of urbanisation? Is there any evidence of significant changes in the economy? Did the fifth and sixth centuries see a shift of activity and resources from cities to the countryside? Even the Christianisation of Asia Minor is still imperfectly understood.⁴³ Werner Tietz's survey of important recent archaeological research on the cities of Lycia shows that no signs of urban decline can be found that is to be dated earlier than the plague of 541/42. Archaeology in Lycia

39 Whitby 2006, 443–448. Whitby's arguments are linked to a 'model' assuming essential continuity of civic government from government by *curiales* to government by notables, while mine are based on a 'model' emphasizing discontinuity.

40 Cf. Michel 2001.

41 Cf. Jäggi/Meier 1997.

42 See also the papers in Parrish 2001.

43 See Trombley 1994, 52–133; Harl 2001; Caseau 2004. There is also the paradox that while in the sixth century bishops were given more legal power than ever before, it was the fourth and fifth centuries which produced most of the famous bishops (cf. Mitchell 1993, 121).

has been concerned with villages as well as towns.⁴⁴ It is of course impossible to understand the development of cities without taking into account developments in the countryside.⁴⁵ Marc Waelkens and his team are facing the problem of town and country head on.⁴⁶ Their project combines systematic excavation of the city of Sagalassos with surveys of the surrounding territory.⁴⁷ I am sure that everybody is looking forward to their final results. Andrew Poulter is doing something similar at Nicopolis ad Istrum in the Balkans, an area that does not figure in this volume.⁴⁸ The Sagalassos team, and also the team working at Aphrodisias under R.R.R. Smith and Christopher Ratté⁴⁹ have now set themselves the task of excavating ordinary housing, which is absolutely essential if we are to make progress in understanding the functioning and development of ancient cities.⁵⁰ When we have had more excavations of that kind we will be able to provide better answers to many of the questions discussed at the Munich meeting.

Was Post-Curial Government Significantly Different?

We have noted that there is clear evidence that around AD 500 there took place an important change in the way cities were governed, a change from government by *curiales* to government by notables. It is a question of some importance whether this was a decisive turning point, as I have assumed, or a stage in a much more gradual process as Giovanni Cecconi has argued in connection with the civic élite of Late Antique Italy.⁵¹ Avshalom Laniado has assembled the evidence for the evolution of Late Antique civic government in the East in an important monograph.⁵² His conclusion is that government by notables did replace government by *curiales*, but he interprets this as a change in terminology rather than substance. In his view the notables who are seen to be in

44 See W. Tietz 2006, 257–281.

45 See Westphalen 189–192 above; Graf 2001; Rautman 2001; and the essays in Bowden/Lavan/Machado 2004 (esp. Baird 2004).

46 Cf. Vanhaverbeke/Waelkens 2003.

47 See Waelkens *et alii* 2006, 199–255.

48 See Poulter 1982, 74–118, on the lower Danube province of Moesia Inferior; also Chevalier 1996; Duval/Marin 2000 on the abundant late church building in Dalmatia.

49 Cf. Ratté 2001.

50 On ordinary housing in Egypt, see Alston 2002, 44–127; also Husselman 1979. On late antique housing generally: Sodini 1995/97.

51 See Cecconi 2006, 297–302.

52 Laniado 2002.

charge of civic affairs in the Novels of Justinian were basically the same kind of people performing the same functions as the *curiales* had done before them.⁵³

This conclusion remains to my mind debatable. The fact that there was a new constitutional terminology in itself makes it likely that there also was a significant change in the substance of civic government. The character of the new terminology indicates a change of a particular kind. For the words used in the laws of the later 6th century to describe the groups involved in the government of cities, that is *oikētores*, *ktētores* and *proteuontes* (inhabitants, land-owners, leading men) all have a wide range of reference, so that one would expect their meaning in the context of municipal administration to be given a precise and unambiguous definition. In fact the laws never define how an individual becomes qualified to belong to one of these groups. This is quite different from earlier legislation in which constitutional terms like *curia*, *curialis* and *principalis* had a definite significance. This suggests, to me at least, that the functioning of civic government had changed significantly, that its organisation had become less well defined and less uniform from city to city, and that the imperial government ceased to be interested in the precise constitutional arrangements of provincial cities. My interpretation of these changes can be read elsewhere.⁵⁴ But in any case the laws strongly suggest that in the 6th century the old civic council (the *curia/boulē*) had lost its responsibility for the city. Indeed it seems to be the case that in many cities the old council building was abandoned or transferred to another use.⁵⁵ Yet there is no evidence that a new standing institution took the place of the old civic council. At any rate while the laws are addressed to the notables, that is *ktētores* (*possessores*) and *proteuontes* (*primates*), they are never addressed to a formal assembly of notables. Indeed they do not even have a word to describe such an assembly.⁵⁶ To me the fact that there was a new terminology suggests that there also was a new situation which the terminology reflects, with the result that the cities were now administered by an authority which was altogether much less formally regulated, and less open to public scrutiny than that of the *curiales*

53 Laniado 2002, 254: "l'accès des notables à l'ordre sénatorial ne modifie pas le caractère local des aristocraties municipales: ce sont toujours des citoyens éminents d'abord et des sénateurs ensuite".

54 Liebeschuetz 2001a, 104–136.

55 See Waelkens *et alii*, 2006, 199–225, esp. 220–22. (Sagalassos); also Roueché 1989, 79f. (Aphrodisias); and more generally Lavan 2003, 317–321. Cf. also Feissel 1999, 122–124 (abandonment of all buildings of the old Agora, including the *bouleuterion*, at Ephesus); Jäggi 1990, esp. 166 (abandonment of the forum between the late 4th and the mid 5th century at Aquileia).

56 For a different view, see Laniado 2002, 211–214.

had been. It does therefore not seem to be simply a coincidence that by the second half of the 6th century in many cities of the East the forum was falling into decay, and streets and public spaces were being encroached upon by private buildings.⁵⁷ This does look as if the municipal authorities had either lost control, or interest, or both. At the same time financing of civic services by liturgies, that is by competitive munificence, had largely, but not entirely, come to an end.⁵⁸ These changes suggest that there had been significant change both in civic organisation and ideology.

Curiales continued to exist,⁵⁹ but they seem to have become a small minority among the civic élite.⁶⁰ It is doubtful whether from the later fifth century many civic notables were still in any sense *curiales*, or even the descendants of *curiales*. On the contrary, it is at least arguable that most of them represented a class of 'new men', or descendants of 'new men', who had risen in the imperial service.⁶¹ The fact that the 'new' notables, like the *curiales* before them, were landowners does not mean that they must necessarily have held the same views of what duties they owed to their city. After all in the course of history landowners have been responsible for running a great variety of systems of government. Apart from the changing secular context, deeper Christianisation and the growing influence of bishop and clergy in the city are likely to have made a considerable difference to the political culture.

Whether one treats these changes as an aspect of a gradual transformation of society in response to a changing social and political context, or as marking the end of an epoch, or as the dawning of another, is a question of historical perspective. Constitutional politics of the classical type certainly did not exist during the Middle Ages, until they were rediscovered in the Renaissance. When

57 In the West the dereliction of public buildings began more than a century earlier, but there it was probably linked to insecurity and impoverishment, which was not the case in the East.

58 Liebeschuetz 2001a, 170–175. The fact that the Justinianic Code retains so many laws recalling *curiales* from posts in the imperial service or the Church suggests that they still performed important duties in a significant number of cities. CJ 3.3.52.1 (531); Cassiod. Var. 9.4; Greg. M. Epist. 4.26 suggest that exaction of taxes was still their characteristic duty. But Nov. Iust. 6.1 (535); 38 (535); 87 (539); 123.1, 4, 15 (546) show that the government was more concerned to keep the property than the person of a *curialis* at the disposal of his city. A *curialis* who forsook his council would have to cede three quarters of his property.

59 In the East the *curiae* were formally abolished only in Nov. 46.8 of Leo VI (886–912).

60 The early 7th-century fiscal papyrus of Hermopolis lists only 3 or 4 *politeuomenoi*, but very many more individuals of senatorial rank: 40 *lamprotatoi* (men and women) and 12 *illustrioi*. See Gascou 1994, 62.

61 Banaji 2001, 134–170.

did they disappear? There is inevitably something arbitrary about assigning turning points in history.⁶² But if there is a point in time when the classical politics can be said to have come to an end in the cities of the East, I would argue that it was the taking over of municipal government by notables in the reign of Anastasius.

It is clear that the development of the *curiae* was not the same in the East and the West. There is good evidence that the civic councils continued to play an important role in the cities of the West far longer than in the East.⁶³ There is thus no single point in time when post-curial government can be said to have begun in the West. In Italy the Gothic wars of Justinian produced a tremendous upheaval and mark a significant turning point. But there probably was a great deal of regional diversity in the West in this field.

The Factors Making for Change

Late Antiquity was an age that saw much change: transformation, innovation, growth, but also as I insist, destruction, shrinking, narrowing of horizons, in brief, decline. But what caused the change? Our literary and epigraphic evidence allows us to observe two causes of change in great detail: the fall of the Empire, and Christianisation. The impact of the first has loomed large in traditional histories of the Later Roman Empire. It is not prominent in the proceedings of this conference, as it has not been in much of the recent scholarly work on the period. On the other hand Christianisation is central to several contributions. It is now becoming clear that the Christianisation of the cities of the Empire was considerably slower than has been thought in the past. This is clearly shown in all the regional surveys of this volume: in many cities in most regions the proliferation of churches begins only in the late fourth century or even later.⁶⁴ The same seems true for institutional and social changes connected with Christianisation: Avshalom Laniado argues plausibly that the text of a law of 409 which has been preserved as CJ 1.55.8 does not represent the law as originally promulgated, but as amended by the editors of Justinian's Code (529–34). According to Laniado the original law had not included the bishop

62 To mention just one example: the reorganisation of the Empire by Diocletian has long, and with considerable justification, been seen as a turning point in municipal government, but as Cecconi 2006, 286–297, and Witschel 2006, 368–375 have argued, the affairs of Italian cities display continuity as well as discontinuity across the reign of Diocletian.

63 Jones 1964, 761 n. 110; on *curiales* in Merovingian Gaul: Loseby 2006, 89–92.

64 See also Duval 1994; Hellenkemper 1994.

and clergy among the electors of the *defensor civitatis*.⁶⁵ They were inserted by Justinian's editors who brought the old law of 409 up to date by interpolating a sentence which incorporates an extension of the bishop's authority into the secular sphere that seems to have occurred only in the reign of Anastasius (491–518).⁶⁶ Jens-Uwe Krause has presented a mass of evidence from secular legislation, the acts of church councils and the correspondence of pope Gregory the Great, which illustrates the social origins and status of the ordinary clergy. On the basis of this he concludes that clerics were often of relatively humble origin, and that there was a very large gap between the status of a bishop and that of the clergy, and also between that of a landowner and the clerics serving the church on his estate.⁶⁷ Most of the evidence discussed is from the West. Historians have on the whole neglected the ordinary clergy. There is probably still a lot to be said on this subject.

The breakdown of the imperial system and the rise of the Church were certainly powerful factors driving social change in Late Antiquity. It is indeed likely that they were more influential than any others. But they were certainly not the only ones. For instance Marxists have placed great stress on the consequences of the failure of the 'slave economy'.⁶⁸ This volume does not include any contribution written from a Marxist point of view, but Noel Lenski assembles evidence that publicly owned slaves continued to be employed in the service of cities into the fourth century, and goes on to discuss the implications of what seems to have been a significant decline in their employment in the course of the later fourth and early fifth centuries.⁶⁹ There may have been other factors at work as well: Archie Dunn studying the archaeology of settlements in Macedonia and Northern Greece argues that it provides evidence for a process of progressive decentralisation, that is the delegation of the function of cities to rural settlements, with the result that many cities lost city status, while villages and forts acquired sophisticated stone fortifications and churches and sometimes bishops, all of which had previously been distinguishing features of cities.⁷⁰ It may well be that something of this kind happened elsewhere too. Peter van Minnen points out that the Antonine plague (perhaps smallpox?) could have resulted in a sharp decline in the population of Egypt which was

65 See Laniado 2006, 319–334.

66 See Laniado 2002, 173f. On the relatively slow extension of the bishop's power see also Rebillard/Sotinel 1998.

67 See Krause 2006, 413–439.

68 E.g. the chapter "From slave to *colonus*" in De Ste Croix 1981, 226–259.

69 See Lenski 2006, 335–357.

70 Dunn 2004, with references also to Dunn's earlier work.

never entirely made good.⁷¹ Other social, economic and perhaps even climatic factors⁷² must have played their part. In an extremely interesting book Jairus Banaji has argued that it was the establishment of an abundant gold currency in the second half of the fourth century that launched the economic boom of Late Antiquity in the Near East.⁷³ The trouble here is that activities that do not involve politics (taken in its widest sense) or religion do not figure prominently in ancient literature, and are therefore very difficult to observe, and even more difficult to assess. That is one of the reasons why not very much was said about them at the Munich meeting, and why they do not occupy a great deal of space in my own book.

Egypt and its papyrus documents offer a route into these more obscure areas.⁷⁴ The physical environment of Egypt and the history of Egypt are of course unique, even in the Near East; but in the last few years scholars have concluded that, in Late Antiquity, the institutions of Egypt were much more like those of its neighbouring provinces than they had been in earlier times. This means that that we can use the information provided by the papyri to throw light on other Near Eastern regions which lack such documentation. Furthermore the papyri provide evidence that can be quantified, and which therefore enables scholars to attempt to discuss social and economic trends in numerical terms, and to formulate answers to questions such as: did the total population grow or did it decline? Did taxation become heavier or lighter? Did rents rise or fall, farms become more or less productive?⁷⁵ Papyri make it possible to discuss the population of cities, the number of slaves, the occupations of the urban population, the scale of the textile and other industries.⁷⁶ Egypt provides tax registers from which we can estimate the level of taxation,⁷⁷ and accounts that illustrate the functioning of a monetary economy. It also allows us to observe the interaction and division of function between city and village

71 See Scheidel 2001a; on malaria see Sallares 2002. On the 6th century bubonic plague, cf. Sarris 2002, 169–79.

72 Gunn 2000.

73 Banaji 2001, 39–88.

74 See van Minnen 2006, 154–161 for an extremely useful survey of the evidence. He comments that 95% of known papyri have not yet been published.

75 Cf. Rathbone 1991.

76 Bagnall 1993, 82–88.

77 Bagnall 2003; cf. Jones 1964, 264 (he works with a higher rate of tax than that argued for by Bagnall).

much more comprehensively than anywhere else.⁷⁸ Van Minnen has in fact given us compact economic history of Late Roman Egypt, which is both interesting and controversial.⁷⁹

A methodology that has not featured prominently at the Munich discussions is the argument from models based on more recent and more fully documented cities. This is the approach associated with the late Keith Hopkins, and now with Walter Scheidel.⁸⁰ Another development in urban history is to examine the transformation of cities against a regional background, and to make the basic unit of study not the single city but a regional network of cities.⁸¹ To understand the functioning of a city it is necessary to study its interrelation not only with the surrounding countryside and but also with other cities, that is to study city networks. This is difficult to do for the cities of Antiquity and has scarcely been attempted, but Neville Morley has begun by studying the impact of Rome on the surrounding areas of Italy.⁸² It is also the case that in order to assess what it is happening to a city it is necessary to look at it as a whole. Decay in one area might well be balanced by innovation and even expansion in an other.⁸³ Unfortunately ancient historians are rarely in a position to take such a comprehensive view.

The use of comparative models and the study of networks rather than just individual cities are two techniques which are probably indispensable if progress is to be made in the debate over the economic role of the Greco-Roman city. In the last decades there has been a reaction against the view of the economic functions of cities held by Max Weber, A.H.M. Jones and Moses Finley, the model which stresses the overwhelming importance of agriculture in the economy of the cities, and minimises their contribution to manufacture and commerce.⁸⁴ The present position might tentatively be summarised as follows: cities did have a significant role in manufacture, and in the distribution

78 Alston 2002 has an enormous amount of information of the kind available only from Egypt.

79 He concludes that Egypt in the 6th century, though more productive and prosperous than in the fourth century, was still considerably less so than it had been under the Early Empire before the Antonine plague. If this is right it would suggest that the economic development of Egypt was not in step with the rest of the East.

80 Hopkins 1978; 1980; 2002; this is also the approach of the contributors to Scheidel 2001b.

81 Astill 2000, 214–234; esp. 222f.

82 Morley 1996.

83 Cf. Lilley 2000.

84 See Hopkins 1978; Parkins 1997; Andreau 2002. The whole of Scheidel/von Reden 2002 is essentially a discussion of Finley's book.

of manufactured articles, raw materials and agricultural products, and their economic role did provide a substantial factor in the growth, prosperity, and even the survival of Greco-Roman cities. But the importance of the economic role varied very greatly from city to city, and it is still very much less well understood than the cities' administrative, political and cultural roles and their role as centres of consumption.⁸⁵ And if the question is approached from a comparison of the proportion of human and natural resources devoted on the one hand to manufacture, distribution and commerce, and on the other to agriculture, administration and politics as well as consumption, the Weber/Jones/Finley view still looks very attractive.⁸⁶

Another recent development has been a rehabilitation of the positive economic role of great estates. Peter Sarris has argued that the growth of large estates in the East was an important factor in the Late Antique boom in that area,⁸⁷ and Chris Wickham has pointed out that the existence of large estates in northern Gaul and their absence in Britain can account for the striking differences between the material cultures in the two areas.⁸⁸

Wickham has also produced the most plausible general theory to account for the breakup of the ancient Mediterranean trade system, and of much of the material simplification that accompanied it. He argues that the boom in commerce under the Roman Empire was made possible by subsidised movement of corn and other resources on a very large scale on behalf of the imperial government to Rome and the frontier armies, because it meant that private traders could have their goods carried on subsidised transport. Accordingly the fading-out of most of this trade was a somewhat drawn-out consequence of the ending of government subsidised transport.⁸⁹ This is what Mark Whittow has called the 'Fiscal Model' which he argues ought to be supplemented by the 'Intensification and Abatement Model' put forward by Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell.⁹⁰ The latter model stresses the importance of cycles of more and less intensive exploitation of land and other natural resources, exemplified by the alternation of phases of nomadic uses of land with agricultural use

85 Wilson 2001; 2002a; 2002b. Of course manufacturing activities that are urban today need not have been so in Antiquity.

86 Hopkins 2002; Saller 2002.

87 Sarris 2004.

88 Wickham 2003, 398 proposes the interesting and challenging generalisation: "If any given region has neither a rich state nor rich landowners, then by and large its peasantry will be more prosperous. However, its economic infrastructure will be weaker, its buying-power will be heavily decentralised, and its material culture will be simpler".

89 Wickham 1994. See also the wide-ranging survey of Ward-Perkins 2000.

90 Whittow 2003; Horden/Purcell 2000.

on the fringe of the Arabian desert. These cycles are certainly real and important, but they are a function of the physical circumstances in which historical events take place. The phenomena discussed by Horden and Purcell interact with historical developments and set parameters for the impact social human action can have on its environment. Geography, geology and climate certainly influenced the decline (or if you like transformation) of the Empire and the way of life of its inhabitants, particularly on a regional level. But I don't think that they can provide a model for explaining the decline (or transformation) itself.⁹¹

Niedergang oder Wandel, Decline or Transformation?

So far I have avoided the question of whether what happened to cities ought to be classified as transformation or as decline. But that does not mean that the concept of decline has no application to this period. The reader of the proceedings of the Munich conference cannot fail to observe that sooner or later, in some regions already in the fourth century, in others in the fifth, in still others in the sixth or even in the seventh century important aspects of the urban civilization of classical antiquity went into dramatic decline. The imperial structure came to an end, the pagan cults were replaced by Christianity, the classical institutions of civic self-government disappeared, and with them the classical concept of what a city should look like. It is likely that in many parts of the Empire land went out of cultivation, and the population was greatly reduced. Where, and when these developments happened it is the duty of a historian to find out, and when a historian notices phenomena reflecting social or economic 'abatement' he surely must be allowed to use the word 'decline'. Of course the period under discussion did not see only decline, it also saw innovation and growth. The historian must take note of both, but a particular historian will be more interested in one phenomenon than the other, and decline is just as proper a subject for historical research as growth or transformation.

Besides decline and transformation are not mutually exclusive alternatives. Whether one sees what happened to cities in Late Antiquity as transformation or as decline depends on one's point of view. History is a process of transformation. 'Time's ever-rolling stream' flows on without break or

91 For some critical comments on Horden/Purcell 2000 (which are not intended to deny the importance of their book) see Liebeschuetz 2002. I also think that Horden/Purcell observe the cycles of 'intensification and abatement' in a longer and more impersonal perspective than that employed by other historians.

interruption. But in order to give this process significance, the historian, particularly if he wants to write diachronic history,⁹² has to isolate and select particular developments, which inevitably have a beginning and an end, that is an origin, growth and decline. Whether a historian focuses on 'decline', on 'continuity' or on 'innovation', depends on what interests him or her. People will always be intrigued by the question why the amazing Roman Empire came to an end, that is by the story of its Decline and Fall, as in the eighteenth century Edward Gibbon was intrigued by it. Gibbon had a particular reason for seeing the Later Empire as a period of decline. He was a man of the Enlightenment. He wanted to role back the influence of the Church and enlarge the secular sphere of society. So he regretted the "triumph of barbarism and Christianity", and he accordingly entitled his work *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Henri Irenée Marrou was a liberal catholic, who was interested in finding an ideal of Christian culture that was at the same time traditional and appropriate to modern circumstances.⁹³ He found inspiration in the writings of St Augustine, and decided that Augustine used what at first sight seemed traditional classical forms to express a view of the world which was neither classical nor yet medieval. Marrou felt that this new intellectual word needed a name. He proposed *culture de la théopolis*, but he also pointed out that the Germans had already created the name *Spätantike*, i.e. Late Antiquity. So in 1949 he wrote his *Retractatio*, arguing that the thought of Augustine had to be assessed in the context of the culture of his time, and that it was wrong to consider that culture a culture of decadence.⁹⁴ This was a real turning point in studies of the late Roman period: the proclamation of the autonomy of the civilisation of Late Antiquity.⁹⁵ Peter Brown and others have followed in Marrou's footsteps. But the difference between the assessment of Gibbon and that of Marrou has nothing to do with the historical reality of Late Antiquity. The difference is a matter of point of view: Gibbon wrote as a man of the Enlightenment, Marrou as a committed Catholic. Late Antiquity like every period of history involves

92 It is not a coincidence that much of the writing of the 'Late Antiquity School' is synchronic; it provides an overall view rather than a sequence of events or developments in chronological order.

93 See Riché 2003.

94 Marrou 1949, 663–699, esp. 694f.

95 The concept of Late Antiquity as a distinctive period that stands on its own has a prehistory involving the Viennese art historian Alois Riegl (1858–1905; cf. Riegl 1901), the writings of the *religionswissenschaftliche Schule* of Göttingen (from around 1890–1925, see Simon 1975; Marchand 2003), and Oswald Spengler's eschatological *Untergang des Abendlandes* (1920–22, first draft 1912). Cf. Bähler 1999.

transformation, as well as growth and decline. In fact none of these can happen without the others.

I want to make a final point. Today many, though not all, would agree that there was a great deal of decline going on in Late Antiquity, but few if any would therefore condemn the entire age and its culture as a decadent age. What has changed? I think the point is that at least since the Renaissance, and until quite recently, the civilisation of the Greco-Roman world, especially its literature, philosophy, politics and art were seen as examples which modern society needed to emulate. The fact that their own society was so different from that of Greece and Rome was thought to be a bad thing and therefore the change which had produced these inferior societies involved deterioration, that is decline. In the last fifty years our society has abandoned the view that the achievements of the classical world should be emulated, and no longer finds them to be of unique relevance. Consequently we no longer consider the disappearance of the classical world an unmitigated disaster. But this does not alter the fact that the end of the classical world did involve a great deal both of loss and of decline, and the historian, when he meets these phenomena, should be allowed to call them by their proper name.⁹⁶ Does it matter? I think it does. Because banning discussion of decline leads—and to some extent already has led—to a denial that anything involving loss ever happened, and that gives a very one-sided view of the past, and indeed of human existence.

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96 I am not putting forward 'decline' as a 'model', a procedure rightly rejected by Whitton 2001, 137. Here and elsewhere I use the word as the appropriate term to describe many developments that happened in Late Antiquity. Like most words 'decline' has been applied in a very wide range of contexts, including some which are politically undesirable. But I don't think a word should be blacklisted because of the use which some writers have made of it (otherwise Cameron 2003).

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Unsustainable Development: The Origin of Ruined Landscapes in the Roman Empire*

We are to day interested in growth, in increased productivity. In the case of agriculture this means making it possible for the same piece of ground to feed more people or at least to make it possible for the same number of people to have a higher standard of living. In a word, to enable two blades of grass to grow where one grew before. How well did the Roman Empire do when judged by this criterion?

Wherever the Romans established their rule they created, or stimulated, profound agricultural change, a kind of agricultural revolution,¹ which is described for convenience, though with much simplification, as the introduction of the villa system.² Its effect surely was the creation of a greatly increased agricultural surplus. And it was this, which in turn nourished Roman colonies, provincial urbanisation, Roman armies and above all the population of Rome itself, which by the time of Augustus had grown to something like a million inhabitants. The question is whether the Roman 'agricultural revolution' resulted in a permanent increase in the agricultural productivity of the areas involved. The conclusion of this paper is that it did not. The 'growth' initiated or stimulated by Roman rule was real and substantial. It was sustainable too, in that the systems created under Roman rule were stable for many years. But it appears that Roman agricultural growth almost invariably was succeeded by

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1 K. Greene, *The archaeology of the Roman Economy* (London 1986), 98–123; G. Barker and J. Lloyd, *Roman Landscapes; Archaeological Survey in the Mediterranean Region*, Archaeological Monographs of the British School at Rome 2 (London 1991); P. Leveau, P. Silières, J.-P. Vallat, *Campagnes de la Méditerranée romaine-occident* (Paris 1993).

2 The description 'villa' covers a wide range of buildings from a solidly built farm-house of a holding large enough to produce cash crops, to a palace like structure with attached farm buildings, the centre of an estate. In the early colonial settlements in Italy the farm type were in the great majority, see F. Cambi, 'Demography and Romanisation in Central Italy', in J. Bintliff and K. Sbonias, eds., *Reconstructing Past Population Trends in Mediterranean Europe. The Archaeology of Mediterranean Landscapes 1* (Oxford 1999), 115–127, esp. 124–126.

periods of decline, which often left the land less productive than it had been at the starting point of the development. Moreover the same cycle of growth and reversal seems to have been largely independent of physical and climatic conditions. At any rate it can be observed in regions that were totally dissimilar in terms of geology or climate.

Reversal when it came was gradual and spread over centuries. In Europe decline began in different regions at different times, but generally still within the period of the Early Empire. In Africa the development started later, and the ultimate collapse was later too. In the Near East dramatic expansion was a feature of the Late Empire, and the reversal came correspondingly later, but it came there also. My procedure will be to start with a discussion of three areas of Italy, and then go on successively to Baetica in Spain, to Northern Gaul and the Rhineland, to Africa and finally the desert fringe of what to day are Syria and Jordan.

The transformation of the area around the colony of Cosa began in the third century BC, with the foundation of the colony. Subsequently there was a steady increase in the number and density of solidly built farm buildings of every kind. Wine and olive oil were produced for the market on a large scale. The development reached a climax in the first century AD.³ Then a steady and continuous reduction in the number of sites set in. The people making the survey found c. 245 sites in occupation at the end of the first century AD, 115 at the end of the third, 84 by the end the fourth, 53 by the end of the fifth. One cause of this development was the amalgamation of properties into ever larger units. But an effect almost certainly was the emptying out of large areas of the countryside, as also of the city of Cosa itself, that is of the market centre of the region. Thus town and country declined together.⁴

3 F. Cambi, E. Fentress, 'Villas to castles: first millennium AD demography in the Albegna Valley', in K. Randsborg, ed., *The Birth of Europe: Archaeology and Social Development in the first Millennium* (Rome 1989), 74–85; E. Fentress, 'Creation, transformation and failure', *Journal of Roman Archaeology, Suppl.* 38 (Ann Arbor 2000), 9–24.

4 S.L. Dyson, 'Settlements patterns in the Ager Cosanus: The Wesleyan University Survey 1974–76', *Journal of Field Archaeology* 5 (1978), 251–68; Idem, 'Settlement reconstruction in the *ager cosanus* and the Albegna valley', in G. Barker and R. Hodges, eds., *Archaeology and Italian society: prehistoric, Roman and medieval studies* 1. BAR International Series 102. Papers in Italian Archaeology 2 (Oxford 1981), 269–274; E. Fentress, 'Cosa in the empire, the unmaking of a Roman town', *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 7 (1994), 208–22. On the revival of Cosa as a Byzantine fortress, with a *mansio*, a church, a cemetery, and a few huts, see M.G. Celuzza and E. Fentress, 'La Toscana centro-meridionale: i casi di Cosa-Ansedonia e Roselle', in R. Francovich and G. Noyé, *La storia dell' alto medioevo italiano (vi–x secolo) alla luce dell'archeologia* (Florence 1994), 601–13.

Significantly the breakdown of the system of rural settlement did not happen, or did not happen as radically, in the territory of Saturnia, away from the coast. There agricultural specialisation had not developed to the same extent, and smaller villas continued to produce a wider range of crops, with the result that the region was less vulnerable than the area nearer the coast.⁵

Surveys in Southern Etruria show that the development was quite parallel to that in the northern survey area, although the proximity of Rome must have made a considerable difference to the economy. Here decline, that is reduction in the number of settlements registering in field surveys, began in the third Century AD. By 500 between 50% and 80% of the sites had been deserted. As around Cosa, we can observe concentration of ownership into fewer hands, but there also is evidence that land was abandoned. Strangely enough this seems to have happened especially in the neighbourhood of roads. One might perhaps compare the abandonment of settlements on the Fosse Way in Britain. From the eighth century there is evidence of the establishment of hill settlements. In other words, a new pattern of settlement was replacing the Roman one, giving great importance to situations of natural strength.⁶

Campania was and is exceptionally fertile because of its volcanic soil. The area in the north of Campania examined by Arthur experienced dramatic development from the third century BC. The establishment of Latin colonies was followed by the building of solid stone farms, which you can call villas, but included villas of every kind. Eventually Roman senators assembled estates and built great country-houses. The produce, that is corn, oil and especially wine, was sold in Rome and all over the West. Site density reached a maximum in the last century of the Republic and the first of the Empire. A sharp decline began before the end of the second century. Around the end of the 5th century occupation becomes almost imperceptible to field surveys. Roads, harbours and aqueducts had fallen into ruin. Great areas of marshy swamp had developed around the coast. But in the valley of the upper Liris, away from the coast where Roman rule had also resulted in the building of villas, but smaller villas which did not eliminate farms of more modest size, a system of mixed farming did not go into early decline, but survived from the republic into the sixth century.⁷

5 I. Attolini, et al., 'Political geography and productive geography between the valleys of the Albegna and the Fiora', in Barker and Lloyd 1991, op. cit. (n. 1), 142–152.

6 T.W. Potter, *The Changing Landscape of Southern Etruria* (New York 1979), 92–167.

7 P. Arthur, *The Romans in Northern Campania* (London 1991).

With Baetica we enter an area where dramatic development began two hundred or more years later than in the regions of Italy discussed so far. It began in the first century AD and was targeted at the production of olive oil.⁸ Huge quantities were exported to Rome. J. Remesal Rodríguez has calculated that 5,600,000 kgs of oil were sent to Rome each year.⁹ The development of this export was surely one of the factors responsible for regression in Italy. But this boom too came to an end. Here the end came in the third century.¹⁰ The effect on the landscape does not appear to have been as devastating as in northern Etruria and northern Campania. There seems to have been a return to arable farming organised around very large villas.¹¹ But as in Italy there was a dramatic reduction in the number of occupied sites. By the seventh century 70% of the sites known from the second century appear to have been abandoned.¹²

The reduction of exports of oil from Spain is likely to have been caused by a dramatic expansion of the export of oil from North Africa, especially modern Tunisia. There arable cultivation had over centuries been spreading from the area around Carthage to the edge of the desert.¹³ But from the 2nd century AD there was a striking development of the growing of olive trees for the purpose of the export of olive oil which soon reached all shores of the Western Mediterranean. This export weathered the fall of the Western Empire to a

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- 8 M. Ponsich, *L'implantation rurale antique sur le Bas-Guadalquivir*, 3 vols. (Paris 1974–1987) and vol. 4 (1991) reviewed by S. Keay in *Journal of Roman Studies* 83 (1993), 236. K.E. Carr, *Did Roman Government Matter? The Standard of Living in the Guadalquivir valley AD 300–700* (PhD University of Michigan 1992), has applied Heyes' pottery dates to Ponsich's finds, and so been able to estimate the number of settlements at different dates.
 - 9 J. Remesal Rodríguez, 'Baetican oil and the Roman economy', *Journal of Roman Archaeology, Suppl.* 29 (1998), 183–99; Idem, 'Politik und Landwirtschaft', in: P. Herz and G. Waldherr, eds., *Landwirtschaft im Imperium Romanum*. Pharos, Studien zur griechisch-römischen Antike 14 (St. Katharinen 2001), 235–255.
 - 10 L.H. Curchin, *Roman Spain: Conquest and Assimilation* (London 1991), 131, fig. 71.
 - 11 P. Silières, 'La péninsule ibérique', in: P. Leveau and J.P. Vallat, eds., *Campagnes de la Méditerranée romaine* (Paris 1993), 201–49; A. Padilla Monge, *La provincia romana de la Bética* (Écija 1989).
 - 12 K.E. Carr 1992, op. cit. (n. 8), 198–200.
 - 13 P. Troussel, 'Limes et frontières climatiques', in: Idem, *Histoire et archéologie de l'Afrique du Nord* (Paris 1986), 55–84; P. Leveau, 'L'Afrique du Nord' in: Leveau, et al. 1993, op. cit. (n. 1), 155–200; J.-L. Ballais, 'Land degradation in the Eastern Maghreb', in G. Barker and D. Gilbertson, eds., *The Archaeology of the Drylands*, (London/New York 2000), 125–136, relevant 130. J.M. Lassere, *Ubique populus, peuplement et mouvements de population dans l'Afrique romaine 146 av. J.-C. – 225 ap. J.-C.* (Paris 1977), on demographic expansion from 2nd century.

surprising extent, and it continued on a significant scale perhaps to the end of the sixth century, or even later.¹⁴ The physical remains of the economic development in Africa have been traced. The story of regression is still very obscure.¹⁵ But the fact of eventual regression, indeed of dramatic regression, is evident, as photographs of Numidia to-day will confirm. When, and in what stages, regression happened is still obscure.

We now move away from the Mediterranean to northern Gaul, that is the region of the Somme and the Rhineland. Climate and economic links are entirely different. But once more the years of the Early Empire saw dramatic development. The region around the Somme in the North East of France was covered with a dense network of villas.¹⁶ Abandonment of sites began even before the third century. It was not rapid, but there is little evidence for the occupation of any of the sites after the early fifth century.¹⁷ Written sources show that the area was not depopulated. So the totally negative impression left by field surveys is misleading. But the particular kind of development stimulated by the *pax Romana* evidently did not last.¹⁸ It depended on a particular social situation. Further north in the Rhineland the trend was identical, though its rapidity in different areas depended on factors like location and geology.¹⁹ What this shows is that the basic pattern was not a consequence of

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- 14 S. Gutiérrez Lloret, 'Eastern Spain', in: R. Hodges and W. Bowden, eds., *The Sixth Century: Production Distribution and Demand* (Leiden/Boston/Cologne 1998), 161–183, esp. 164f., 181–183; S.T. Loseby, 'Marseille and the Pirenne thesis', *ibid.* 203–229, esp. 210–214; P. Reynolds, *Trade in the Western Mediterranean AD 400–700, the Ceramic Evidence*, BAR International Series 604 (Oxford 1995).
 - 15 G. Vitelli, *Islamic Carthage: The Archaeological and Ceramic Evidence* (Tunis 1981); Y. Thébert and J.-L. Biget, 'L'Afrique après la disparition de la cité classique', in: *L'Afrique dans l'occident romain I^{er} siècle avant J.C. – 4^e siècle après J.C.* Collection de l'École Française de Rome 134 (Rome 1990), 575–602.
 - 16 R. Agache, *La Somme pré-romaine et romaine* (Amiens 1978); *Idem*, 'La campagne à l'époque romaine dans les grandes plaines du nord de la France d'après les photographies aériennes', in: W. Haase and H. Temporini, *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* II.4 (Berlin 1975), 658–713; K. Greene, *The Archaeology of the Roman Economy* (London 1986), 116–120.
 - 17 P. v. Ossel, *Établissements ruraux de l'antiquité tardive dans le nord de la Gaule* (Paris 1992). See also the discussion in E. Wightman, *Gallia Belgica* (London 1985), 243–266.
 - 18 Was the Romanization of land-holding in Northern Gaul a result of the need to supply corn to the legions on the Rhine, and can the decline of the villa system be linked to the development of corn farming in the Rhineland, together with a reduction of the military importance of the Rhine relative to the Danube frontier?
 - 19 C. Bridger, 'Die römerzeitliche Besiedlung der klempenerer Lehmplatte', *Bonner Jahrbuch* 194 (1994), 61–164, esp. graph on p. 86; M. Gechter and J. Kunow, 'Zur ländlichen Besiedlung

specifically Mediterranean conditions, but that it was somehow rooted in the working of Roman society.

The latest case of dramatic agricultural development under Roman rule was the great extension of settlement in to the steppe bordering the desert on the eastern frontier in what now is Syria and Jordan. This process began in the fourth century AD, and continued to the middle of the sixth century. It began in northern Syria and gradually moved south. The development of the eastern frontier is unusual in that its historian need not depend on field surveys, but can study relatively well-preserved remains of houses and churches. Furthermore many of the buildings bear an inscription giving the date of their construction. So Tate was able to state quite conclusively that growth stopped around 450 and went into reverse around 600.²⁰ In Jordan growth began later and continued until later. There reversal came after 750. As in Africa, the present state of the landscape, or rather the state not many decades ago,²¹ suggests that eventually the greater part of the area reverted to the conditions of steppe.

So much for the overall picture. An important book has recently been published on the development of Mediterranean landscape, *The Corrupting Sea* by Horden and Purcell.²² In a very general but fundamental way their conclusions are quite similar to those reached in this paper. They stress the importance of geography and climate which remained generally constant,²³ and has tended to reverse the effect of energetic human efforts to change the environment. Change in the countryside is cyclical rather than linear, a phase of what they call 'intensification' is eventually followed by a phase of 'abatement'.²⁴ This is I think a fair description of many of the developments I have discussed.

des Rheinlandes in römischer Zeit'. *Bonner Jahrbuch* 186 (1986), 377–86, esp. graph p. 391, based on surface finds.

20 G. Tate, *Les campagnes de la Syrie du Nord, IV^e au VII^e siècle* 1 (Paris 1992); G.R.D. King and A. Cameron, eds., *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East 2: Land Use and Settlement Patterns* (Princeton 1994).

21 This impression is based on field surveys. For references see my *The Decline and fall of the Roman City* (Oxford 2001), 72 n. 72.

22 P. Horden and N. Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea. A Study in Mediterranean History* 1 (Oxford 2000).

23 Horden and Purcell 2000, op. cit. (n. 22), 340: "The major environmental conditions of the Mediterranean have not in aggregate changed to a historically significant extent over the last four millennia".

24 Horden and Purcell 2000, op. cit. (n. 22), 264: Local intensification involves its reverse, the abandonment of an initiative when it is complete or when circumstances change.

The emphasis on the importance of physical conditions, and of the instability of the physical environments in the Mediterranean, is certainly illuminating, and indeed salutary. 'Intensification' followed by 'abatement' can be observed all over the Empire in the East as well as in the West, but 'intensification' clearly did more lasting damage in Mediterranean conditions than in Gaul, and even around the Mediterranean the long-term effects of Roman intensification differed from region to region. Horden and Purcell are surely also right to warn against attempts to explain rural change by changes in the natural environment alone. Change has always been produced by a combination of natural and human factors.

But when it comes to the history of intensification and abatement in particular regions whether Northern Etruria, or Campania or Baetica, or Arabia, or wherever, the book is not very helpful. The emphasis of the book is on historical geography rather than social history. Its very considerable interest lies in discussion of topics like deforestation,²⁵ alluviation,²⁶ the relationship of pastoral and arable farming, and the usefulness of scrub-land. Northern and Southern Etruria, Campagna, Baetica, Northern Syria, all provide illustrations of the factors that make for change in landscape, but the history of none of these landscapes is treated systematically. So the value the book to the historian is to pose new questions, rather than help answer old ones, to stimulate new projects of research rather than to answer questions posed by papers such as the present one. But it must be remembered that this is only the first volume.

There is another problem. Certain ideas, almost dogmas, are repeated throughout,²⁷ which to me at least appear to be distinctly unhelpful when it comes to explaining the cyclical developments with which I am concerned in this paper. For instance Horden and Purcell do not believe that population growth was a dynamic factor for change: 'We see no exogenous variable promoting really sustained population growth'.²⁸ They consider that 'demographic determinism has little place in Mediterranean history as we see it'.²⁹ They insist that land-hunger as opposed to land-greed is not normally a very

25 Horden and Purcell 2000, op. cit. (n. 22), 337–8, 604–5. Early deforestation with subsequent liability to erosion in Apulia: C. Delano Smith, 'Where was the wilderness in Roman Times?' in G. Shipley and J. Salmon, eds., *Human Landscapes in Classical Antiquity* (London/New York 1996), 154–179, esp. 154f.

26 Horden and Purcell 2000, op. cit. (n. 22), 312–328; 602f.: the arrival of 'the Younger Fill' was not a single event.

27 I think it is not unfair to say that the authors are strongly influenced by the ideology of the contemporary ecological movement.

28 Horden and Purcell 2000, op. cit. (n. 22), 267.

29 Horden and Purcell 2000, op. cit. (n. 22), 268.

helpful category. The need to raise production to feed a growing population is considered unimportant in discussions of agrarian productivity. Failure and inadequacy are caused by war and social injustice. They quote approvingly: 'Starvation is blue-blooded'.³⁰

I think that this principle makes it distinctly more difficult to understand the development of landscapes in the Roman Empire. For it seems to me that it is very difficult to explain the rural transformation of parts of Italy as a consequence of Roman expansion without positing the existence of population wanting land. The character of the civil wars that ended the republic also suggests the pressure of population demanding land.³¹ Again the extraordinary expansion of village settlement in the Late Antique Near East is very difficult to explain without the assumption of a growing population.

Horden and Purcell again and again stress the great variety of Mediterranean ecologies: "The distinctive texture of Mediterranean land is to be found the sub-dividedness . . . the continuousness of discontinuities."³² This is an important observation, and the interrelation and mutual supplementation of micro-regions, for instance in circumstances of regional crop failure,³³ could be a profitable field of research. But change of the kind discussed in this paper affected very large areas at the same time. The growth in the number and size of villages in the eastern provinces from c. 400 to c. 550, and sometime well beyond that seems to have taken place all the way on the desert fringe from Egypt to Mesopotamia, and also to have had parallels in Palestine, Cilicia and Lycia and elsewhere in Anatolia. This obviously is a phenomenon overriding the discontinuities of Mediterranean landscape.

As a model of change Horden and Purcell strongly insist on gradualism. They have no place for catastrophe. The book presents: 'An environmental history without catastrophe'. Rapid and radical transformation of whole regions, they argue, 'will be rare or non-existent. However terrible and sudden the accidents that may befall each locality, the complexity of the processes of interlocking diffuses the impact of the effect on the ensemble of thousand of definite places'.³⁴ It may indeed be rare that a natural catastrophe can be

30 Horden and Purcell 2000, op. cit. (n. 22), 267.

31 See E. Lo Cascio in Bintliff and Sbonias 1999, op. cit. (n. 2), 161–171.

32 Horden and Purcell 2000, op. cit. (n. 22), 53.

33 W. Jongman, 'Hunger and Power', in: A.C.V.M. Bongenaar, *Independency of Institutions and Private Entrepreneurs*, MOS Studies 2 (Istanbul 2000), 259–284, esp. 276f.

34 See p. 339, see also *ibid.*: "Relative frequent repetition makes us want to associate ourselves with those who are reluctant to use the notion of catastrophe . . . We see the relationship between human communities and the environment as a relatively stable symbiosis."

isolated as the only factor responsible for a significant change in the environment, but it surely has repeatedly been the case that a great disaster marks a historical turning point. So the coming of the bubonic plague in the mid sixth century marks a turning point in many spheres of life in the Roman East,³⁵ and the same was surely true of the Black Death in the fourteenth century in the West.³⁶ Moreover if terrible and sudden change is taken to include political change, then the changes that took place in parts of Italy in the later republic, and in Gaul under the early empire, were surely both radical and rapid. The reversal of 'growth' in the east, from 'intensification' to 'abatement' does appear to me to have proceeded not imperceptibly, but by sharply distinguished stages, the earliest of which was signaled by the calamity of the first of a recurring series of visitations of plague, and in Northern Syria also by what turned out to be a series of devastating Persian invasions.³⁷ I would argue that the calamities of the 540s had a permanent negative effect not only along the desert fringe, but over the whole of the Late Roman East.³⁸ A second and intensified phase of abatement in Northern Syria followed the Persian invasion and occupation of Syria. Paradoxically the Arab conquest seems to have made little immediate difference, but the replacement of the Syrian Umayyad by the Abbasid dynasty seems to have led to striking acceleration of abatement in town and country in the whole area.³⁹

It would appear that the Roman empire did produce growth, the equivalent of getting two blades of grass to grow where only one had grown before. One factor that helped to make this possible, or at least should be investigated as a possible factor assisting growth, is technical innovation, or at any rate the introduction by the Romans of technical innovations to areas where they had not been previously applied.⁴⁰ Several other factors that produced

35 Liebeschuetz 2000, op. cit. (n. 21), 53; 391f.; 409f.

36 J. Bolton, 'The world upside down' in M. Ormrod and P. Lindley, eds., *The Black Death in England* (Stamford 1996), 17–78.

37 F.R. Trombley, 'War and society in rural Syria c. 502–613 AD', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 21 (1994), 154–129.

38 For slow sustained decline of population following rapid growth to subsistence limit cf. M. Kiel, 'The Ottoman imperial registers' in J. Bintliff and K. Sbonias, eds., *Reconstructing Population Trends in Mediterranean Europe* (Oxford 1999), 196–218: disaster is followed by rapid growth of population to limit of capacity, in turn followed by long decline in central Greece AD 1460–1660.

39 Liebeschuetz 2000, op. cit. (n. 21), 72f.; 314.

40 Horden and Purcell 2000, op. cit. (n. 22), 232: "The study of inventions and innovations is conceptually subsequent to relations of control and subservience which have principally

agricultural development have emerged in papers at this conference.⁴¹ Yet considerable uncertainty remains. For instance I know no obvious explanation for the great Late Antique boom in the East.⁴² However the successive phases of abatement are more difficult to explain than those of intensification. They clearly cannot be explained in terms of physical causes alone, since they occurred in regions as diverse as the Rhineland and North Africa. It seems clear that agricultural decline particularly in areas specializing in the production of olive oil and wine was furthered by competition; in Italy by the competition of Baetica, in Baetica by that of North Africa. The competitive advantage of Africa was greatly assisted by the fact that very large numbers of shippers were subsidized to carry the *annona* from Africa to Italy to feed Rome.⁴³ No doubt transfer of armies, for instance from the Rhineland to the Balkans,⁴⁴ will have had a detrimental effect on farms that had developed to meet the legions' needs in their original location. It does however look as if there was also an inherent factor of self-destruction. By this I mean the process by which what was originally a system of small farms fell into ever fewer hands, with peasants often being replaced by slaves. The early stages of this development must have made the system more productive, but the eventual outcome at least in Etruria and Campania, and perhaps also in Tarraconensis,⁴⁵ was that arable farming or arboriculture were largely abandoned. Of course there were local factors too. I have argued that the Late Antique boom in the East was reversed by the combined effect of recurring plague and of war. It is likely that changes

shaped decisions about production in the Mediterranean and elsewhere", may well be true in a very general sense, but this does not mean that the study of agricultural innovation and its propagation are irrelevant.

41 See De Blois and Rich (eds.) 2001 (pp. 1x–xx), Jongman (pp. 28–47), De Ligt (pp. 48–66), Erdkamp (pp. 93–115) and Drinkwater (pp. 128–140).

42 Horden and Purcell 2000, op. cit. (n. 22), 274f. The argument that it represents successful representation, not economic development, is far from convincing.

43 Chr. Wickham, 'Marx, Sherlock Holmes and Late Roman Commerce', in his *Land and power: studies in Italian and European social history, 400–1200* (London 1994), 77–118 = *Journal of Roman Studies* 78 (1988), 183–193.

44 See John Drinkwater in De Blois and Rich (eds.) 2001, pp. 128–140.

45 Horden and Purcell 2000, op. cit. (n. 22), 281; J.M. Recassens, *La ciudad de Tarragona* II (Barcelona, 1975), 69–85; S. Riera Mora and J.M. Palet Martinez, 'Landscape dynamics from Iberian-Roman (2nd–1st centuries BC) to early medieval times (12th century) in the Montjuïc-El Port sector (Plain of Barcelona)', *Archeologia Medievale* 21 (1994), 517–38. See also J.M. Palet Martinez, *Estudi territorial del Pla de Barcelona* (Barcelona 1997).

in the sea level contributed to the degradation of land in Northern Campania.⁴⁶ I would also suggest that we must not rule out the possibility that in lands on the margin of the desert very small changes in rainfall may have made all the difference whether land continued to be cultivated or not.

The title of this paper promises a discussion of ruined landscapes in the Roman Empire. It has I believe produced evidence for a cyclical development that eventually after centuries left some landscapes less productive than they had been before. But this does not necessarily mean that the eventual regression was the result of the landscape having been ruined by more intensive exploitation, much less that it was precisely the detrimental effect of the Roman period of intensification which inflicted permanent damage. It is however worth asking the question whether in some areas there was fundamental damage of the kind that could only be reversed by the application of modern resources and modern technology, if indeed it can be reversed at all. Horden and Purcell write: 'It is important to recognize that there were indeed more deltaic plains, fewer dense woodlands, more eroded badland etc in the nineteenth century than there had been in the Bronze Age. But those aggregate changes had come about in so piecemeal a way that it is not even possible to attribute them to periods, let alone to moments, and they were mostly susceptible to reversal.'⁴⁷ This is extremely pessimistic, and it would suggest that there is no point in a historian trying to establish the precise circumstances of the origin of the bad lands of the Roman Empire, or to answer the further question to what extent, if any, these bad lands of imperial Rome have remained bad lands ever since. But that seems excessive pessimism. In some cases intensification certainly involved serious destruction of the environment, sometimes more sometime less irreversible.⁴⁸ But in many cases the return to a more 'primeval' form of exploitation of the landscape will have been an adaptation to changed social

46 A. Humbert, *Campagnes andalouses et colons castillans* (Madrid 1988): deforestation of slopes, and accumulation of sediments to form vast marshy areas in former lagunes is comparatively recent.

47 Horden and Purcell 2000, op. cit. (n. 22), 339.

48 Agriculture caused degradation to some extent in the Maghreb (see J.-L. Ballais, 'Land degradation in the Eastern Maghreb', in G. Barker and D. Gilbertson, eds., *The archaeology of Drylands* [London/New York 2000], 125–136, relevant 130f.), and very considerably as the result of a combination of arable-caused erosion and heavy metal mining in the Wadi Faynan (see G. Barker, 'Farmers, herders and miners in the Wadi Faynan, Southern Jordan', *ibid.* 63–85), but not in the Negev (see S.A. Rosen, 'The decline of desert agriculture: a view from the classical period Negev', *ibid.* 45–62), or in Tripolitania (see D. Gilbertson, C. Hunt and G. Gillmore, 'Romano-Lybian floodwater farming', *ibid.* 137–159).

conditions linked to the disappearance of the Empire.⁴⁹ Some badlands that have sometimes been believed to have been degraded by Roman misuse of the landscape only become bad as a result of modern technology. The Romans must have cut many trees in connection with their building projects, for ship-building and for fuel, but they also were aware of the need to plant and conserve forests for coppicing.⁵⁰ It is well established that railways and other modern modes of transport have greatly accelerated deforestation around the Mediterranean.⁵¹ There have been episodes of reforestation as well as of deforestation since Roman times.⁵² The fact is that for much of the Roman Empire the landscape history is still very obscure. We are still at an early stage in this investigation.

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- 49 R.-B. Hitchner, 'The Kasserine archaeological survey', *Antiquités africaines* 24 (1988), 7–41; 26 (1990), 231–260: expansion following Roman control involves the becoming sedentary of nomads. At the end of the fifth and early 6th century AD the decline of the Roman system stimulated a retreat from corn and arboriculture. The yielding of olive to palm represents a choice of inhabitants as production of agriculture became less attractive.
- 50 Roman landowners planted trees for coppicing, feeding pigs, timber and amenity: R. Meiggs, *Trees and Timber in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Oxford 1982), 261–278. In all classical literature Meiggs has only found one complaint at over-felling: Sidonius 5.441–4.
- 51 Meiggs 1982, op. cit. (n. 50), 371–403. On Spain see Humbert 1988, op. cit. (n. 46): deforestation of slopes, and accumulation of sediments to form vast marshy areas in former lagunes is comparatively recent.
- 52 Cycles of deforestation and reforestation: P. Hemphill, 'Deforestation and reforestation in a central Italian hinterland; land usage during and after the Roman occupation' in R.F.J. Jones, ed., *First Millennium Papers: Western Europe in the first Millennium AD*, BAR International Series 401 (Oxford 1988), 147–158. See also the titles in Chr. Wickham, *Land and power: studies in Italian and European social history, 400–1200* (London 1994), 184 n. 61.

Warlords and Landlords*

Conflict between the central ruler and local and regional magnates, whose power was based on the possession of large estates, is a constant theme in the history of the kingdoms of medieval Europe. This theme hardly occurs in the history of the Roman Empire up to the late fourth century. The military power of the emperor was so overwhelming that no local magnate or even combination of magnates could think of challenging it. There were some very wealthy landowners in Italy and the provinces, but they were civilians, and they commanded tenants and clients but not armed followers. Emperors were often challenged, and not rarely overthrown by usurpers, but these were almost invariably the emperor's own officers, most typically generals who had been successful in a major campaign.

Clearly there is a problem with how and when the Roman situation changed into the medieval one. In an extremely stimulating chapter of an extremely stimulating book C.R. Whittaker has discussed this problem and traced the beginnings of the process to the later fourth and fifth centuries.¹ In his view this period saw the fading of a sharp boundary between lands belonging to the empire and lands outside it as a result of the establishment in frontier regions of a variety of practically independent principalities, large and small, governed by locally based rulers, whom he groups together under the collective title of “warlords.” This “model” is the starting point of the present chapter.

1 Delegating Defense of the Frontier

There can be no doubt that the later fourth century saw a weakening of the monopoly of military power of the emperors and their armies. But the process was complex and driven by a number of seemingly independent factors. As might be expected the weakening was most notable in frontier regions. But even there a number of causal factors were involved. The empire's loss of control was certainly not entirely due to pressure from across the frontier. A significant factor was that both in Africa, and along the edge of the Arabian Desert,

* This article was previously published in *A Companion to the Roman Army*, ed. P. Erdkamp, Oxford: Blackwell, 2007, pp. 479–494.

1 Whittaker 1994, 243–78.

the imperial government adopted a policy of delegating frontier defense to tribesmen settled in frontier regions, whose regular transhumant movements also took them into areas beyond the frontier.² The empire eventually lost control of this strategy, but it was first adopted voluntarily.

Along the North African desert fringe large stretches of frontier were assigned to local tribesmen. The *Notitia Dignitatum* lists the local divisions that made up this system, and the titles of their commanders, the *praepositi limitis*.³ But to reconstruct the functioning of the system, and incidentally also to show how it related to the organization of this region under the early empire, we have to look elsewhere, to inscriptions and campaign narratives. The *praepositi* were Roman officers, but they were drawn from the local tribes. They were powerful locally, as they possessed their own fortified headquarters (*centenaria*).⁴ But some were more powerful than others. Outstandingly powerful was the family of Nubel, “petty king” (*regulus*) among the Moorish people (Ammianus Marc. 29.5.2), whose son Firmus in 373 led a large scale revolt against the Roman government. Nubel had been a Roman officer. His brother Gildo helped the Romans to defeat Firmus, and was given the command of the Roman forces in Africa. His daughter married a nephew of the empress Flacilla. In 397 he too rebelled, only to be defeated by a Roman army commanded by his brother Mascezel. His property was confiscated and a separate financial department created to administer it (*Not.Dig.Occ.* 12.5). These men were warlords in the full sense of Whittaker’s model.

We have little information about the African frontier during the fifth century, apart from the light thrown on military affairs by the career of the general Bonifatius 3, much of which he spent in Africa.⁵ Our next detailed account is in Procopius’ narrative of the Justinianic reconquest of Africa from the Vandals. At this time the frontier zone was occupied by a series of Moorish kingdoms whose rulers were still formally Roman appointees (Procopius, *Bella* 3.25.5–9), but who were in practice independent, and who were to encroach on the reconstituted Roman provinces as they had previously expanded at the

² Shaw 1985.

³ *Notitia Dignitatum*, ed. O. Seeck, 174–5, 184–5, 186–7. While the chapter lists *praepositi limitis* it does not name military units. Other than in Africa the *Notitia* invariably names the units guarding the frontier army. The units listed in the *Distributio numerorum*, *ibid.* 141–2, as stationed in Africa, belong not to the frontier army, but to the mobile field army.

⁴ Lepelley 2001, 307–17. See the detailed discussion in Matthews 1976, 157–86. More generally: Whittaker 2000, 518–31.

⁵ On Bonifatius see s.v. Bonifatius 3, *PLRE* 2, 237–40.

expense of the Vandal kingdom.⁶ They presumably were the descendants of the Roman *praefecti gentium* and *praepositi limitum*.

According to the lists of the *Notitia Dignitatum*, which in this case seem to represent the organization of the early fourth century,⁷ the desert frontiers of Syria and Palestine were guarded by units of *limitanei*, stationed in forts scattered along the frontier region, but for the most part situated along the military high way, the *strata Diocletiana*, running from the Euphrates to Damascus, and possibly beyond that to the Red Sea. But the empire was already allied to some of the nomad tribes who were settled within the empire but whose transhumant movements took them across the frontier region and into the desert beyond the jurisdiction of Roman officials.⁸ We are told that after the eastern field army had been almost destroyed in the battle of Adrianople in 378, soldiers sent by the Saracen queen Mavia helped to defend Constantinople (Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.1.3; Sozomen *Hist. Eccl.* 7.1.1; Ammianus Marc. 31.16.5–6). In the fifth century groups of Arab tribes under their own leaders (phylarchs) of the Salih tribe seem to have played a growing part in the defense of the eastern frontier, not least against raids of the Lakhmids, the powerful tribe that had established its centre at al-Hira on the lower Euphrates, and was allied to the Persians. In the sixth century, in the reign of Justinian, the imperial government placed the various allied tribes under the single command of the Ghassanid dynasty. At the same time many, but not all, the frontier forts seem to have been evacuated, so that the tribesmen under Ghassanid leadership now appear to have been given principal responsibility for control of passage in and out of the frontier zone, and for defence of the region from raiders, though certainly not from a large scale invasion, which was not anticipated from the desert. The Ghassanids seem to have been established in several small towns south of Damascus, and some of the remains of monumental residences on the fringe of the desert may have been theirs. The Ghassanid phylarch might well qualify for the title of warlord.

But even in the sixth century the frontier region in the east was not entirely denuded of Roman units, and the phylarchs and their followers were formally integrated into the Roman administrative system; Justinian made the Ghassanid phylarch subject to the “moderator” of Arabia, that is to the official responsible for both the civil and military administration of the province (*Nov. Iust.* 102). It is not known how the spheres of authority of the Roman officials,

6 See Brett and Fentress 1996; Camps 1984, 183–218.

7 Jones 1964, 57–9, but the lists themselves are later than 395 (*ibid.* 349).

8 Sometimes only intermittently: Ammianus 25.6.10. The evidence is very scanty, see Conrad 2000, 689–95; Isaac 1990, 239–41.

and that of the phylarch were delimited. Later in the century the imperial government dismantled the Ghassanid federation. But it continued to rely on tribesmen to protect the frontier from raids by other nomad tribesmen, and particularly, when the Romans and the Persians were at war, to repel raids by tribesmen allied to the Persians, and to raid the Persians' allies in turn.⁹

Among the factors which induced the government to adopt a defensive strategy of delegation along the desert fringe in the Near East and in North Africa consideration of geography may well have been decisive. Nomads and semi-nomads would be more at home in desert or semi-desert conditions than regular soldiers. In Syria there was the need to protect frontier areas from raids of the Lakhmids. In North Africa too the sedentary population was subject to raiding by nomads, even though not by nomads allied to a rival empire. As the tribesmen assisted the empire while carrying out their own nomadic pursuits, they were probably cheaper than regular troops would have been. At any rate we are told that it was the prospect of financial advantage that induced Valens to admit the Visigoths into the empire, because it would enable the government to spend the recruiting tax on other expenses (Ammianus Marc. 31.4).¹⁰

2 Over-Mighty Generals: West

Phylarchs and other tribal leaders operating in the frontier regions of North Africa and Syria were one kind of "warlord." Army commanders sufficiently powerful to be able to defy or even dominate the emperor were another, though the circumstances which empowered them were quite different. The over-powerful army commander was in the first place a western phenomenon. With Merobaudes, the commander of the troops in Gaul and on the Rhine 375–385, there begins a line of commanders-in-chief who rivalled and often surpassed the emperor in power. It is a formidable line: Arbogast (388–394) was followed by Stilicho, who from 394–408 practically governed the western empire, followed by Constantius (411–421), whose victories enabled the empire to recover from the Alaric crisis, and who married Placidia, the daughter of Theodosius I, and during the last months of his life from April to September 421 held the rank of Augustus. Then came Aetius (435–454) whose victories postponed the collapse of the imperial organization in Gaul, Ricimer (456–472), Orestes (475–476), and finally Odovacer (476–493) who deposed Romulus

9 On the Salih tribe, Sartre 1982, 146–9; Kavar 1958, 145–58, Isaac 1990: withdrawal of only some units: 210–13; nomad allies 235–49. Gaube 1984, 61–6. Shahid 1984.

10 Carrié 1995, 27–50.

Augustulus, the last emperor of the west, and reigned as king for the rest of his life.¹¹ To give an adequate account of these warlords one would have to tell the history of the western empire, but the highlights of the career of Ricimer dramatically illustrate the reversal of the traditional relationship of emperor and commander-in-chief. For Ricimer took a decisive part in the deposition of the emperor Avitus (455–456) and subsequently played a leading part first in the appointment and then in the deposition and killing of the emperors, Maiorian (457–461), Libius Severus (461–465), and Anthemius (467–472).

How is the evolution from powerful commander-in-chief to warlord and finally monarch to be explained?¹² One factor was the range of the command given to Stilicho by Theodosius I after the defeat of the usurper Eugenius in 394. As *magister militum utriusque militiae* Stilicho commanded all field army units in the west, wherever they were stationed, with the *duces* of the frontier troops under his disposition as well.¹³ Stilicho's successors inherited this plenitude of power, at least in theory. In the long run, as the central government's control over the more distant provinces weakened, the geographical range of commander-in-chief in the West became less and less important. What was ultimately decisive was control of the army that mattered, the army based in Italy.

Accident helped to strengthen the position of the western commander in chief relatively to that of the emperor. Honorius (393–423), the son and successor of Theodosius I, was quite incapable of leading an army, and Valentinian III (425–455) became emperor at the age of five and never had any military experience. Institutional changes had made it easier for civilian emperors to remain in power. It had been a central feature of the Diocletianic organization of the empire that civil and military administrations should form two distinct hierarchies, united only by the person of the emperor, who headed both. This division remained. At the same time the activities and interests of the emperors tended to become increasingly civilian. Starting with the successors of Theodosius, both in the east and the west, the emperor as a rule no longer led his army against the enemy, but left this to professional generals. This came to be the case even if, as in the reign of Leo and Zeno,¹⁴ the

11 On all these generals O'Flynn 1983; on Ricimer *PLRE* 2, 942–5, s.v. Fl. Ricimer 2 and MacGeorge 2002, 209–68; on Odovacer: MacGeorge 2002, 269–93.

12 Heather 2000, 5–10, 25–7, links the weakening of imperial authority with the shrinking of its financial resources.

13 Jones 1964, 174–5.

14 *PLRE* 2, 663–4 s.v. Leo 6, *ibid.* 1200–2, s.v. Fl. Zeno 7.

emperor had himself been an officer, and even commanded an army earlier in his career.

In the East this arrangement worked reasonably well throughout the fifth and sixth centuries. But not in the West, where after the murder of the civilian emperor Valentinian III in 455, the general Ricimer was in a position to make and unmake emperors. The fact that both Maiorian and Anthemius had led armies, and continued to do so as emperor,¹⁵ did not enable them to stand up to Ricimer. One reason was surely that each in turn was discredited as a result of a disastrous expedition against the Vandals in North Africa. But throughout Roman history we can observe that successful generals were likely to become a danger to the central government, whether republican or imperial. Successful campaigning resulted in close bonds between general and troops, which the general could, and often did, try to exploit to his advantage. The proclamation of Julian is only the best documented example of a victorious general being proclaimed Augustus by his troops (Ammianus Marc. 20.4.1–5.10). The numerous military crises of the later fourth century, which continued through most of the fifth, produced many opportunities for the bonding of general and other ranks.

Institutional developments of the later fourth century greatly strengthened an inherent tendency. Changes in recruiting strengthened the bond between commander and his troops. The campaigning armies were now very largely composed of miscellaneous units of federates. Many of the federates had probably been recruited for a specific campaign by the commander himself. This is particularly well documented in the cases of Stilicho and Aetius. It was therefore the commander who instilled a sense of unity among his units, and it was to him, as much and often more than the emperor that they looked to reward them for their service. Moreover armies now included a category of elite troops who enjoyed a close relationship with the commander, because they acted as his bodyguard.¹⁶ These were the so-called *bucellarii* who had sworn loyalty not only to the emperor but also to their commander, and who in addition were maintained, at least in part, at his expense.¹⁷ At the same time the settlement of barbarians in western provinces, and above all the loss of the rich provinces of North Africa to the Vandals progressively destroyed the emperor's financial resources, and therefore his ability to reward his soldiers.

15 *PLRE* 2, 702–3, s.v. Fl. Iulius Valerius Maiorianus, *ibid.* 96–8, s.v. Anthemius 3.

16 Federates: Liebeschuetz 1990, 37–8; Liebeschuetz 1993, 265–76.

17 Basic on this still quite obscure topic: Gasco 1972, 143–56; discussed from different points of view also by Carrié 1995, 27–60, esp. 52–9; Whitby 1995, 61–124, esp. 116–19, and recently Schmitt 1994, 147–74. The evidence for their maintenance is mainly of the sixth century.

All these developments increased the dependence of the soldiers on their commander, and consequently their readiness to support him rather than the head of state.

In important respects the power-basis of these powerful *magistri militum* resembled that of the Germanic leaders like Alaric and Geiseric and the Burgundian rulers who established kingdoms within the empire. Of course the generals owed their original appointment to the emperor, while the kings owed theirs to their own people. But even this distinction is not as fundamental as it might seem, for the tribal leaders too sometimes insisted on being given an imperial command, while the generals depended on the loyalty of their army to assert themselves against the emperor.¹⁸ Perhaps the most important difference between the two types of leaders was that the army of an imperial general was multi-ethnic, while the “people” of one of the great tribal leaders, that is the leaders of one of the major barbarian *gentes*, though far from being ethnically monolithic, nevertheless was united by a single, or at least dominant, sense of ethnic solidarity.¹⁹ Eventually the two positions fused. Odovacer, who deposed the last emperor of the west, was a general who had been made king by his Germanic federates, and he was eventually deposed by Theoderic, king of the Ostrogoths, but after his campaign had been authorized by Zeno, the eastern emperor.²⁰

3 Over-Mighty Generals: East

The history of the east was quite different. There the generals did not prevail, and the emperor and the civil administration did not lose control over the army. How can we account for the difference? It is clear that the factors which enable the *magister militum praesentalis* (and some regional commanders) to become over-powerful in the West were operative in the East also. On two occasions a

18 Note also that it seems that an important group of Franks chose the Roman *magister militum* Aegidius to be their king (Gregory of Tours, *HF* 2.12), and that the Ostrogoths on one occasion offered their kingship to the Roman general Belisarius (Procopius 6.29.18) and in 411 a combination of federates supported Jovinus in a bid to become emperor, (*PLRE* 2, 621–2 s.v. Jovinus 2), and in 455 the Visigoths and the nobles of Gaul combined to proclaim Avitus 5 (ibid. 196–8 s.v. Eparchius Avitus 5).

19 See the chapters on various peoples in Goetz et al. 2003, which however, to my mind at least, tend to overstress the features showing adaptation and change, in fact continuous “reinvention,” at the expense of those representing tradition and continuity in the functioning of the *gentes*.

20 MacGeorge 2002, 269–93; Moorhead 1992, 17–31.

magister militum praesentalis achieved a position at Constantinople comparable to that of the over-mighty generals in the West: Gainas for less than one year in the reign of Arcadius (399–400), and Aspar from the late 450s to 471 in the reign of Leo. Vitalianus, commander of the federates in Thrace, achieved similar but regionally circumscribed power in the lower Danube region from 513, in the reign of Anastasius, to his assassination perhaps at the instigation of the later emperor Justinian in 520. But Gainas was defeated, and Aspar and Vitalianus were murdered, and the supremacy of the emperor's civilian government restored, so that the phases of military dominance remained episodes. There remains the unique career of the man who was to end up as the emperor Zeno.²¹ This was an Isaurian chieftain originally named Tarasicodissa, who took the Greek name of Zeno, and became a Roman officer. His position in Isauria enabled him to recruit troops, so he was a kind of warlord. But he recruited and used the Isaurian soldiers in the service of the emperor Leo, giving him the military backing the emperor required to rid himself of Aspar. So this is a case of one warlord helping to destroy another warlord. Zeno's reward was to become Leo's son-in-law, and eventually legitimate ruler of the empire.

How did civilian government retain control in the East? There is not the space here to go through the whole story of the rise and fall of Gainas, Aspar, and Vitalianus, but it is possible to suggest some reasons why the emperor and his government managed to remain in control of their generals in the East but not in the West. In the West too the government was sometimes able to rid itself of over-mighty generals: Stilicho was executed, Aetius was murdered. But the execution of Stilicho was followed by a flood tide of disasters. The restoration of stability required the rise of another mighty commander in Constantius. The consequences of the murder of Aetius were even worse. It is no exaggeration to say that the western empire never recovered from them. It would seem that it could not function without the leadership of a powerful military figure.

A very important difference between East and West was that the former was not under continuous military pressure. The fall of Gainas in 400 was followed by 20 years of peace. A competent civilian administration was able to establish itself. The indecisive Persian war of 420–421 inaugurated another period of large-scale warfare on different fronts, against the usurper John in Italy, against the Vandals in Africa and, very close to the centre of power, against the Huns in the Balkans. These wars gave rise to the mighty military dynasty of Ardaburius and his son Aspar, the kind of dynasty Stilicho had hoped to found in the West. Perhaps as early as 420 a powerful group of Goths was settled in Thrace, which

21 Gainas: Liebeschuetz 1990, 104–25; Fl. Ardabur Aspar *PLRE* 2, 164–9; Fl. Vitalianus 2: *PLRE* 2, 1171–7; Zeno: *PLRE* 2, 1200–2, s.v. Zeno 7.

was later to be led by Theoderic Strabo (Theophanes, *Chron.* 5931). Somewhat later another group was settled in Pannonia (Jordanes, *Getica* 50.262ff). A section of this group was to become the people of the famous Theoderic of the Amal dynasty, and to be led by him into Italy. So it seemed for a time in the 450s as if the East would develop in the same way as the West. But Aspar did not have at his disposal a large standing army, for the eastern field army was divided into five independent commands, and even the striking force stationed in or near the capital was probably still split into two regular “praesental” armies.²² Judging by the emperor’s regular need for federates, the two regular armies were probably not very large, and Aspar commanded only one of them. His military power therefore depended to a considerable extent on his ability to call on the support of the Gothic federates settled in Thrace. This of course was very different from the position of *magister militum utriusque militiae* in the West, who was theoretically at least in command of all field army units no matter where they were stationed (*Not.Dig.Occ.* 115–132). The emperor Leo was able to exploit the relative weakness of military resources at Aspar’s immediate disposal when, with the help of Zeno, he was able to utilize an abundant source of mercenaries in Isauria whom he recruited in to a new bodyguard, the *excubitors*, and thus established firm military control of Constantinople. So Leo was in a position in which he could kill Aspar and his sons, and subsequently with the aid of geography contain Theoderic Strabo and his Goths in Thrace. Later Zeno was able to ward off the two groups of Goths by getting them to fight each other. Finally he got rid of them for good by encouraging Theoderic the Amal to lead the now united Goths to “liberate” Italy from Odovacer. In these complicated maneuvers the eastern emperors had one very important advantage over those of the West: a very large income from taxation. While Italy had been devastated and the western emperor was losing the revenue from large parts of Gaul, Spain, and, most important of all, North Africa, the heartlands of the eastern empire in Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt continued to pay taxes. This made the eastern government less dependent on generals and large standing armies. The government had the resources to buy off invaders and dangerous federates, and their relatively strong finances enabled them to pay their soldiers adequately, and to raise recruits when they needed them. From the assassination of Vitalianus in 520 to the successful usurpation of Phocas in 602 the

22 The Aspar dynasty: *PLRE* 2, 138, s.v. Fl. Ardabur 3; *ibid.* 164–9, s.v. Fl. Ardabur Aspar and the family tree of his descendants (*PLRE* 2, 1310). The family survived the fall of Aspar. His descendants still figured among the high aristocracy of Constantinople in the sixth century. On the two groups of Goths: Heather 1991, 242–71; the two praesental armies: Jones 1964, 177–8, a list of commanders *PLRE* 2, 1290.

emperors of the east were threatened neither by over-mighty generals nor by warlords.

4 Self-Help in a Disintegrating Empire

The Roman Empire did not collapse suddenly. Its dissolution, or if you prefer transformation, was a gradual process. The most dramatic development was the establishment of large Germanic kingdoms in what had been the provinces of the Roman Empire successively by Vandals, Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Franks, and Lombards.²³ The setting up of barbarian kingdoms within the empire still left very large areas where imperial administration remained, though its functioning was made very much more difficult, or even impossible, by the neighbourhood of barbarian kingdoms, which were often in a state of war with the empire, and whose very existence greatly reduced the empire's financial resources. The results were untidy. What happened was not abandonment and evacuation of provinces by the central government, but rather a gradual loss of control, leaving provincials to defend and administer themselves, using what was left of the military and civil institutions of the empire, together with whatever organization they could improvise.

The most important of these relics of the Roman system were cities and their territories, the *civitates*, which in Gaul at least seem to have continued to exist as functioning units of administration.²⁴ The relics also included fragments of the Roman army, for the frontier troops of the late empire tended to remain permanently stationed in their garrison towns, and as service was in practice hereditary, the men became deeply rooted in the local society. In the fifth century, at least in some provinces, certain frontier lands were reserved for cultivation by *limitanei*, so that at least some frontier troops had become peasant soldiers. But it was probably much more important that soldiers, whether *limitanei* or *comitatenses*, owned private houses and land, and this made them reluctant to be moved from their frontier stations.²⁵

Laeti remain rather an obscure institution of the late Roman army. They probably were descendants of barbarians settled on land with the hereditary duty of serving in the Roman army when called up. Some of them seem to have

23 See the chapters on Vandals, Franks, Ostrogoths, and Lombards in Goetz et al. 2003, and Heather 1996 on Visigoths.

24 Frye 1995; Loseby 2006.

25 Jones 1964, 663–4; but some *limitanei* could be promoted to *pseudocomitatenses*: *ibid.* 99, 126, 609–10; private land of soldiers: *ibid.* 662–3.

continued in the same role under the Franks.²⁶ Units of the field army (*comitatenses*) were mobile by definition, but evidence from Egypt suggests that in practice they too often remained stationed in the same garrison town for very long periods.²⁷ Consequently they came to see it as their first duty to defend their own locality, and it became difficult, or even impossible to move them (Theophylact 7.3.1–10).

When Justinian ordered the *limitanei* of the African *limes* to be reconstituted, he recommended enrolling men who had been soldiers under the Vandals (*quos antea milites habebant*, *Cod. Just.* I.27.2.8 (AD 534). He evidently thought that they would watch over the frontier irrespective of whether they did it under Vandal or under Roman command. It is likely that the Vandals, when they took over Roman Africa, had similarly continued to employ such Roman *limitanei* as remained in the frontier zone. We are told that in Gaul Roman frontier troops continued to serve, first Visigoths and then the Franks, and that they even kept their dress uniform and ensigns (Procopius, *Bella* 5.12.13–19). Similarly the settlements of Laeti, which had furnished soldiers for the imperial army, continued to do so for the armies of the Merovingian kings.²⁸ In Noricum many units garrisoning in frontier towns broke up when they ceased to get their pay, but the garrison of Passau (Batavis) remained and continued to draw pay, long after the others had gone. In Mauten (Favianis) too a small unit appears to have remained after the regular provincial administration had disappeared (*Vita Severini* 20, *ibid.* 4).

We are best informed about the dissolution of the imperial organization in Gaul, though even there the evidence is far from abundant.²⁹ The territories north of the Loire experienced an interregnum in the course of which the imperial authorities became less and less effective. In this difficult and dangerous situation the population of frontier areas had to organize its own defense, and there came into existence a number of more or less independent territories—some large, some small—based on *civitates*, and defended in various ways. A unit of the imperial army might have remain in the locality, or the inhabitants might be able to hire a band of roaming federates,³⁰ or they might take up arms themselves. Some militarization of the *civitates* is suggested by

26 Bachrach 1972, 33–34.

27 Jones 1964, 660–1 (soldiers of Alexandria and Arsinoe).

28 Bachrach 1972, 5, 33–4, 124–8.

29 McGeorge 2002, 71–81.

30 For instance the band of Saxons which Odovacer, later king of Italy, led in Gaul in the 360s (Gregory of Tours, *HF* 2.18–19), or perhaps the force Franks and Romans with which the *comes* Paul operated around Angers around 469 (Gregory of Tours, *HF* 2.19).

the fact that the Merovingians would be able to use them to organize local levies, a function they do not seem to have had under the empire.

No doubt bishops often provided leadership, as they did all over the empire in crisis situations. But leadership was very varied. We are told that St. Genovefa, a nun, kept up morale when Paris was threatened by Attila's Huns, and that later, when the city was threatened or perhaps even occupied by Childeric king of the Franks, she interceded for captives and brought in corn during the siege (*V. Genovefae*, MGH, Script.rer.Merov. III, pp. 26, 35). In Noricum the holy man³¹ St. Severinus organized resistance against the Alamanni and Rugi (*V. Severini*, MGH, AA, I.2, pp. 1–30).

However in most cases leadership was provided by officers of the imperial army. Outstanding among these were Aegidius and his son Syagrius in northern Gaul 461–486. Aegidius, a Gaul and almost certainly a Gallic noble, was appointed commander-in-chief (*magister militum*) of the Roman army in Gaul in 456/7. The evidence is scanty, but it is clear that Aegidius was sometimes an ally and sometimes an enemy of the Franks. He evidently won their respect, for, after he had exiled their king Childeric, they made him their king. When the emperor Majorian was murdered 461 Aegidius refused to recognize his successor, and subsequently operated as an independent warlord, controlling a considerable territory centred on Soissons, and defending it against both the Goths in the south and the Franks in the north. It could well be that he had taken over some of the units of the federate army Majorian had disbanded after his unsuccessful campaign against the Vandals. When Childeric returned from exile to reign over his Franks once more, he allied himself with Aegidius, and together they won a victory over the Visigoths at Orleans in 363. In 465 Aegidius was killed, but his son Syagrius continued to rule the Roman enclave from Soissons.

Why from Soissons? I would suggest that its position between the *civitates* of central Gaul and the territory of Frankish settlement in what is now Belgium made it a convenient centre for Aegidius, particularly while he was king of the Franks as well as the Romans, as it continued to be for Clovis after he had taken over the "kingdom of Soissons." Soissons was the center of a Roman *civitas*, but that was perhaps not what made it important. At least it is not among the *civitates* which are mentioned in our sources as having provided troops for a Frankish army. But it certainly came to be a centre of a cluster of estates of the Merovingian family, second in size only to the cluster centred on Paris. It

31 Lotter 1976, identified him with a Severinus of *illustris* rank, who had once held high office in Noricum, but the letter of Eugippius introducing the *Vita Severini* shows that the origins of the holy man were obscure (*Ep. Eugippii* 7–11).

would seem that Syagrius continued to rule as king (*Lib.Hist.Franc.* 8) until 486, when he was defeated and killed, and his kingdom seized (Gregory of Tours, *HF* 2.27: *regnoque eius accepto*), by Clovis king of the Franks, the son of his father's ally, Childeric.

A similar situation existed in Dalmatia where one Marcellinus rebelled against the emperor Valentinian III, and for some years kept Dalmatia independent both of the emperor and of barbarian rulers. He built up for himself a personal power base there, but it is not clear how. He was a highly educated man, with links to Neoplatonist circles. A nephew of his, Julius Nepos, was married to a relative of the empress Verina. So Marcellinus was obviously a man of very good family, in this respect resembling Aegidius and Syagrius in Gaul. But this cannot have been enough to enable him to raise troops and to lead them successfully. We know nothing of his early years, but if he established his position on the basis of nothing more than his private wealth and personal prestige among his fellow Dalmatians he would have been almost unique among the military leaders of the time. The likelihood is that he started as an officer, who rose to be commander of a major military force.

We do not know for certain that such a force was stationed in Dalmatia in the 450s, but it is extremely likely that it was. The prosperous coastal strip and the important ports along the Adriatic needed to be protected from Huns and other barbarians in the Danube provinces.³² Procopius tells us that Marcellinus was one of the *γνώριμοι* of Aetius, and then that he “got all the others to rebel.” It is quite unclear who are meant by the *γνώριμοι* and by “all the others” (Procopius, *Bella* 3.65.7–8). I would suggest that in this context they must be the same people, and that *γνώριμοι* here stands for officers of the *bucellarii* of Aetius. On that assumption what happened was that after Aetius was murdered his leading *bucellarii* were dispersed,³³ with a number of them, including Marcellinus, being given commands of units in Dalmatia. I suggest that these men and their regiments were the “others” whom Marcellinus persuaded to join him in his revolt. In 461 the emperor Majorian was murdered and it was thought that Marcellinus would invade Italy to depose Ricimer's puppet emperor Libius Severus, but Marcellinus was dissuaded by the eastern government (Priscus fr. 39 Blockley). So by then Marcellinus was in some sense also an officer of the eastern empire. The situation recurred in 374 when Julius Nepos, Marcellinus' nephew and successor, made precisely the intervention in Italy which his uncle had been expected to make, but this time the eastern

32 On Marcellinus: *PLRE* 2, 708–10 s.v. Marcellinus 6 and MacGeorge 2002, 15–67; his neoplatonism: Damascius fr. 151: Athanassiadi 1999, 181 (69A–E).

33 Dispersal of *bucellarii* of Belisarius: Procopius, *Secret History*, 4.13–14; *Histories* 7.10.1, 12.10.

emperor had ordered the intervention (John of Antioch fr. 209). Nepos even became emperor, though not for long.

Marcellinus is said to have ruled Dalmatia justly and well (Damascius fr. 155, 158). His success led to his being appointed to important military commands by different emperors, first to defend Sicily against the Vandals with a force of “Scythians,” presumably either Goths or Huns (Priscus fr. 38.1 Blockley), and later to lead the western contingents in the great expedition against the Vandals of 468. He drove the Vandals out of Sardinia, but was murdered soon after. His nephew Nepos evidently succeeded to his position and rank, for a law was addressed to him as *magister militum Dalmatiae*. This law, issued by the eastern emperor Leo, is concerned with dowries (*Cod. Just.* 6.61.5). Nepos would therefore seem to have been concerned with civil jurisdiction as well as defense, just like his uncle Marcellinus. Nepos was murdered in 480. His murderer, Ovida, ruled Dalmatia briefly, only to be overthrown by Odovacer in 481/2. So the warlord Odovacer reunited the warlordship of Dalmatia with Italy, but Odovacer would in turn be overthrown and killed by Theoderic king of the Ostrogoths.

5 Landlords Do Not Become Warlords

So far this chapter has dealt with a variety of military leaders, all or most of whom enjoyed some degree of irregular and personal power that allows us to classify them as warlords. It remains to discuss how far this irregular power was based on landownership. It is safe to say that all the individuals discussed were landowners on a considerable scale. The ruling class of the Roman Empire was a class of landowners, and under the late empire the great estates were probably larger than ever before. So the military leaders sprung from this class—that is in all likelihood Aegidius, Syagrius, Marcellinus, Julius Nepos, and probably Aetius—were almost certainly from the start great landowners. Gildo, the *magister militum* and hereditary tribal leader in Africa, was also a very great landowner. Moreover public office in the Roman Empire, whether it was civil or military, was a route to greater landed wealth. So Libanius’ speech on patronage (*Orat.* 47) illustrates some of the ways in which local commanders could amass wealth. The higher the rank, the more numerous the opportunities. So it is likely that by the time a man had risen to the highest post in the army he was very wealthy indeed. Merobaudes, *magister militum* under Gratian, and Arbogastes, *magister militum* under Valentinian II, founded powerful local families. The *magistri militum* might even marry into the imperial family: Eudoxia, daughter of the Frankish general Bauto, married Honorius;

Stilicho married Serena, a niece of Theodosius I;³⁴ Gildo's daughter married Nebridius, a nephew of the empress Flaccilla (Jerome, *ep.* 79); Constantius married Galla Placidia, the daughter of Theodosius I; Ricimer married the daughter of Anthemius (Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmina* 2.484–86); and Julius Nepos married a relation of the empress Verina (Malchus, *fr.* 10 [14] Blockley).

But it is safe to say that while increased wealth and brilliant marriages were a consequence of these men's rise to power, they were not what had gained them that power in the first place. Under the conditions of the Roman Empire great landed wealth on its own was not convertible into military power. The great landowners may well have been in a position to obstruct tax collectors and to exercise local leadership, but when it came to warfare on a larger scale, whether it involved resisting barbarian invasion or war between contenders for the empire, they were simply swept aside. It was not the great landowners who decided whether Odovacer or Theoderic should reign in Italy. Syagrius could not stand up to Clovis. The East was rather different: his 7,000 *bucellarii* could not keep Belisarius in his command when the emperor Justinian wanted to depose him (Procopius, *Anecdota* 4.13–15). Even so, when the Arabs invaded Egypt, the great Apion family simply disappeared from the historical record.

Military power that was to count more than locally needed to be based on more than just ownership of large estates. It required above all one of two starting points: a high command in the army or ethnic leadership, and ideally a combination of the two. Moreover, the two starting positions were not totally distinct. The great army commanders became excessively powerful because they were indispensable for the defense of the empire, but also because they became the patrons of barbarian federates. The power of ethnic leaders was based on an ethnic core; but leaders like Alaric, Geiseric, Theoderic, or Clovis also presided over a process of ethnic expansion in which their original group absorbed and assimilated large numbers from other groups. Power based on an imperial command alone did also have a tendency to become hereditary, as is shown by the careers of Bauto, Stilicho, Boniface, Aegidius, and Marcellinus in the West, and Ardabur the elder, father of Aspar, in the East. But only in the case of Ardabur did the power survive to the third generation, and the younger Ardabur was of course put to death in 471, at the same time as his father Aspar.

Historical sources inform us only about the most important leaders. We have seen that the needs of regional self-defense created centres of independent power in frontier regions. There were certainly far more of these than

34 Dynasties and marriages: *PLRE* 2, 756–58, s.v. Fl. Merobaudes 2; *ibid.* 128–9, s.v. Arbogastes; Philostorgius *HE* 11.6, *PLRE* 2, 410 s.v. Aelia Eudoxia; *PLRE* 1, 159–60, s.v. Flavius Bauto; *ibid.* 824, s.v. Serena; *PLRE* 2, 888–9, s.v. Aelia Galla Placidia.

we know about, and far more men who performed the role of an Aegidius or a Sidonius Apollinaris or even a St. Severinus, but on smaller scale, in a more obscure place, or without being lucky enough to obtain a hagiographer. But these local concentrations of power were provisional, and did not last. For a position of power greater than that conferred by high military office to last over generations, it had to have a basis in ethnic leadership, and be in a position to bring about ethnogenesis.

The term ethnogenesis describes the process by which an ad hoc grouping of individuals, for instance a war band, acquires a sense of ethnic identity, which continues to evolve as the group's circumstances change. There were very many processes of ethnogenesis going on at this time. As the administrative structure of the empire dissolved a shared sense of ethnic identity reinforced by religion became by far the most powerful basis of political and military power. Much research of the last 50 years³⁵ into the character of the peoples (*gentes*) of the Age of Migrations, as well as into that of numerous other "tribes" whether contemporary or historic, has shown that in most cases the sense of tribal kinship is a shared myth, which has little or no biological basis, and which undergoes continuous transformation as the circumstances of the "tribe" change, and as it incorporates new members, or subdivides, or shrinks. But this does not mean that the sense of ethnic solidarity was unimportant. In fact new major political and military groupings within the failing empire seem only to have been able to survive for significantly longer than the life of their founder if they had been constructed around an ethnic center.

Great landed wealth on its own could not do it. The senatorial aristocracy of the later Roman Empire was remarkably civilian. Its young men did not normally become officers and their fathers did not command armies. The great estates seem to have become ever larger, and landowners might even have *bucellarii*, but the estates were not like medieval baronies. They certainly had great regional power and they could obstruct the provincial administration's efforts to collect taxes or to recruit soldiers. In some areas the great landowners might seriously hinder enforcement of the law, but they got their way by using influential connections rather than through military power. They did not as a rule play an independent military role, either in civil war, or in defense of the frontiers. In the gathering crisis of the fifth century things began to change.

35 Though the findings of this research were already assumed by Max Weber (in his *Grundriss der Sozialökonomik* III, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Tübingen 1925): "Dieser Sachverhalt dass das 'Stammesbewusstsein' der Regel nach primär durch politisch gemeinsame Schicksale, und nicht primär durch Abstammung bedingt ist" (p. 223). This did not of course stop the extreme exploitation of this already refuted view of ethnicity by the Nazis.

But the reported cases of aristocrats organizing significant armies, whether to resist invaders, or on one side or the other in civil war, are remarkably few. Spanish landowners mobilized their peasants against the usurper Constantine (Zosimus 6.40). Ecdicius, along with 18 comrades, broke a Gothic siege of Clermont Ferrand (Sidonius Apollinaris, *ep.* 3.3.3–6). Synesius led resistance to invading nomads in Cyrenaica (Synesius, *ep.* 107–108, 122, 125, 130, 132–133, *Catastasis* [PG 66, 1572–1573]). It is also the case that to date really very few fortified villas have been found. The western medieval castle does not go back to the fifth and sixth centuries.³⁶ It may be that many of the very numerous fortified hills-settlements that are found in many of the western provinces owed their existence to dominant local landowners, but, if so, this does not show in their archaeology, which very rarely or never includes a seigniorial residence.

It is the case that the aristocracy was becoming remilitarized.³⁷ Ancestors of men like Syagrius, Marcellinus, Avitus, and Anthemius would in all probability have shunned a military career. But we hear that Roman aristocrats fought for the Visigoths against Clovis (Gregory of Tours, *HF* 2.37). A passage in Malalas suggests that Justinian ordered some senators of Constantinople and their followers to garrison cities in Mesopotamia and Phoenicia during a military crisis (Malalas 18[442]). However none of these men were feudal magnates with their own military resources sufficiently great to enable them to play a decisive part in power struggles on more than a local scale. In Justinian's Gothic War (AD 535–54) the extremely wealthy senatorial aristocracy of Italy played no active part. In fact it was one of the war's victims. The class as such was destroyed, and a new and militarized aristocracy grew up in Byzantine Italy. The Germanic peoples were led by a warrior aristocracy. In the Germanic kingdoms Roman and barbarian aristocracies gradually merged. We hear of descendants of senatorial families who held military commands under the Merovingian rulers of Gaul. Laws from the last decade of Visigothic Spain order landowners who have been called up to fight for the kingdom to present themselves together with their retainers, including armed slaves.³⁸ This was the way armies were to be assembled for centuries to come.

36 The fortified villa of Pontius Leontinus (Bourg-sur-Gironde) described in Sidonius Apollinaris (*ep.* 2.9) is far from typical, cf. Harris 1994, 131–3; see also Chavarria and Lewitt 2004, 28–9; Percival 1976, 174–82.

37 Heather 2000, 441–3.

38 Thompson 1969, 262–7; *Leges Visigothorum* IX.2.8 (AD 673), 9 (AD 681); V.7.19.

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The Debate about the Ethnogenesis of the Germanic Tribes*

1 The Problem of the Nature of the Ethnicity of the ‘Germani’ and of the Germanic Tribes

In her book *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity*, Averil Cameron wrote: ‘It is obvious that a steady process of cultural and demographic change had been taking place long before the formations of the barbarian kingdoms . . . The Roman government was not so much faced with discrete incursions as with a slow but steady erosion of Roman culture in the western provinces from within’.¹ The question immediately arises to what extent the culture of the settlers made a positive contribution to this erosion of a specifically Roman culture. But this question is not at all easy to answer.

The ethnic units from the north (*gentes*: ‘peoples’, ‘tribes’) which figure in our sources as settlers in the western provinces of the Roman Empire are described in three different ways. Sometimes we read about ‘Germans’, elsewhere we are told about Goths, Vandals, Burgundians, Franks, and Alamanni, all of whom may sometimes be described as ‘Germans’. Finally there are numerous smaller tribal units, which in Late Antiquity seem to be components of the major *gentes*. The problem of the precise relationship between the Germans as a whole, their major peoples and those peoples’ sub-tribes is a very difficult one. Because the German were illiterate until they entered the Empire, they have not been able to leave us their own account of how they related to each other. We depend almost entirely on Roman accounts. And the Romans were not really very much interested in the institutions of their barbarian neighbours. So there has been very much scope for speculation on Germanic ethnicity.

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1 *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity: AD 395–600* (London, 1993), p. 45.

2 The Reconstruction of the 'Germani'

It has often been said that the culture of modern Europe flows from two principal sources, one Roman the other Germanic. The Roman contribution is easily demonstrated. We have many volumes of Latin literature and law. The Germanic contribution is much more obscure. The Germanic tribes that set up their kingdoms in what had been the Roman empire have left very few indisputable traces of their ethnic way of life. This has had to be reconstructed by scholars from scattered fragments. A great deal of the reconstruction is based on five very different works: Tacitus' *Germania* (2nd cent.), the Gothic Bible (4th cent.), the *Getica* of Jordanes (6th cent.), the *History of the Lombards* of Paul the Deacon (9th cent.) and the Icelandic sagas (13th cent.). However, recourse may be had to other sources, particularly language, law, and archaeology.

Germanic history and culture have been reconstructed ever since the Renaissance. A great deal of effort went into this reconstruction. The reason for this was the belief that the spirit of the ancient *Germani* survived over the centuries and continued to make contemporary Germans what they were. This became an important element in the creation of a German sense of nationhood and patriotism. The Vandals, Goths, Burgundians, and Franks were seen as the original Germans,² and their culture as reconstructed by scholars was considered a model for modern Germans to follow.³

The scholarly reconstruction of the culture of the old Germans has had an enormous impact upon many branches of modern scholarship; one might even say that it helped create it. (I refer, for example, to the great series of publications of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, itself only a very small part of the contribution which the search for the ancient Germans has made to Ancient and Medieval History.)

But the motives that inspired so much scholarly effort became ever more political, and it is not surprising that politicians exploited its products. Such exploitation entered a new phase after Darwin published his *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. The concept of the survival of the fittest allowed politicians, in western Europe in general but in Germany in particular, to make genetic inheritance, that is race, the mechanism by which the spirit and mentality of the

2 E.g. 'So wollen wir uns wenigstens nicht ohne Stolz zu diesen riesigen Heerscharen des frühesten Mittelalters als unserer Art und unseres Blutes bekennen ...' A.S. von Stauffenberg, *Das Imperium und die Völkerwanderung* (Munich, 1950), p. 8. He was the brother of the von Stauffenberg who tried and failed to assassinate Hitler.

3 K. von See, *Barbar, Germane, Arier: die Suche nach der Identität der Deutschen* (Heidelberg, 1994).

ancient Germanic peoples had been preserved for their most recent descendants. There is no need to say how disastrous this development turned out to be with the rise of German nationalism and then of National Socialism.

3 **Wenskus: The Tribes of the Invasion Period were not Stable Societies Based on Common Descent, but Unstable and Subject to Continuous Change**

After the 1939–45 war, it was obvious to nearly every one that racialism was not only immoral but also based on pseudo-science. There was a reaction, which resulted among other things in a revision of views about the early Germans. The Austrian Reinhold Wenskus reconsidered the sources and, drawing on anthropological studies of modern tribal societies,⁴ reached the conclusion that the Goths, Vandals, Franks etc, though always described—probably even by themselves—as *gentes*/tribes (i.e., using a collective noun which implies biologically kinship),⁵ were not in fact kinship organisations. Their unity was not racial but historical. For some of these people we can establish when they came into existence,⁶ but for most of them this date is unknown. However, we can observe how all such *gentes* changed over the years, incorporating some groups and individuals, losing others, subdividing, merging, disappearing and, reappearing.⁷ Wenskus' book is not an easy read, but it has been highly influential. It is easier, in fact, to understand his views of the nature of *gentes* as

4 R. Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung: das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen gentes* (Cologne, 1961; repr. 1977).

5 For example, Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum sive originum libri xx*, ed. W.M. Lindsay (2 vols.; Oxford, 1911), 9.2.1: *gens autem appellata propter generationem familiarum, id est a gignendo, sicut natio a nascendo* (a *gens* is so called on account of the generation of families, that is on account of begetting, just as a nation is so called on account of nativity). Of course in Antiquity the concept of 'kinship' was much looser and less biological than it is today. See H.-W. Goetz, 'Gens: Terminology and Perception of the Germanic Peoples from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages', in R. Corradini, M. Diesenberger, and H. Reimitz (eds.), *The Construction of Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 39–64.

6 E.g. in the case of the Bavarians, see M. Hardt, 'The Bavarians', in H.-W. Goetz, J. Jarnut, and W. Pohl (eds.), *Regna and Gentes, the Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 429–61.

7 P. Heather, 'Disappearing and Reappearing Tribes' in W. Pohl and H. Reimitz (eds.), *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities 300–800* (Leiden, 1998), pp. 95–111.

they have been applied by others, for instance by Wolfram in his book on the Goths,⁸ and in the recent ESF volume, *Regna and Gentes*.⁹

4 The Argument that the Tribes did not have Core Traditions (*Traditionskern*)

But revisionism continues. A younger generation has now appeared, and taken the argument further. Wenskus had argued that the *gentes*, though not unchanging, maintained a significant level of continuity. For instance, Goths remained 'Goths' and Vandals continued to be 'Vandals' because each drew upon a body of tradition and custom which remained intact or changed only very slowly through all the vicissitudes of the group. He called this body of inherited custom *Traditionskern*, 'core-traditions'.¹⁰ The post-Wenskus generation denies that there was such a thing. They insist that these peoples changed totally over the years, and that the cultural continuity implied by the term *Traditionskern* is misleading. To use a modern expression, it is their view that the *gentes* were constantly 'reinventing themselves'.¹¹ They use a sociological model which implies that social groups are infinitely flexible, and can be transformed more or less at will.¹²

This view is represented in a series of papers edited by Andrew Gillett and published in 2002.¹³ The collection presents a highly intelligent systematic

8 H. Wolfram, *History of the Goths* (translated by T.J. Dunlap; Berkeley, 1988).

9 Goetz, Jarnut, and Pohl, *Regna and Gentes* (n. 6).

10 Wenskus did not fully work out what this concept implied, or how many alternatives it allowed, and in this way laid himself open to criticism, but see the discussion in P. Heather, 'The Ostrogoths', in Goetz, Jarnut, and Pohl, *Regna and Gentes*, pp. 85–133, at 95–99, 102–106.

11 In words of F. Barth, cited by P. Heather, 'Disappearing and Reappearing Tribes' (n. 7), on p. 104: 'Identity is an evanescent situational construct', which is more fully explained in F. Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: the Social Organisation of Cultural Difference* (Oslo-London, 1969). A. Bacal, *Ethnicity in the Social Sciences: A View and Review of the Literature on Ethnicity* (Coventry, 1991).

12 W. Goffart 'Did the Distant Past Impinge on the Invasion-Age Germans?' in A. Gillett (ed.), *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2002), pp. 21–37, at 23: 'Social leaders more or less consciously create one or another distant past that present need call for.' However perceived memory of the distant past is only one of many elements in national or tribal tradition.

13 Gillett (ed.), *On Barbarian Identity* (n. 12). P. Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy 489–534* (Cambridge, 1997), has a different approach, but the same determination to deconstruct the Germanic *gentes*.

deconstruction of the picture constructed by scholarship since the early 19th century, i.e., criticising even Wenskus and his school as crypto-nationalists. The argument of these, on the whole younger, scholars is that there was no core-culture—either of the *Germani* as a whole, or even of the separate Germanic tribes. They assert that if we know practically nothing about any of these peoples before they entered the Roman empire, that is because they did not know anything themselves. Goffart insists that memory of historical events is not preserved for more than three generations unless it is preserved in writing or on a monument or in ritual.¹⁴ Those 'Germanic' customs which we know the Germans acquired in the empire, and from the Romans. We cannot therefore identify any specifically Germanic contribution to the post-Roman world.

Each traditional approach to Germanic ethnicity is discredited in turn. Gillett argues that we cannot trust the purportedly traditional myths of common descent from tribal origins in Scandinavia, and of subsequent migrations.¹⁵ We cannot therefore be sure that all, or indeed any, of these tribes were held together by age-old myths of a common origin. Nordic literature is too late to be used to reconstruct the religion, manners, and customs of the peoples of the age of migrations.¹⁶ We cannot trust what Roman historians, especially Caesar and Tacitus, say about Germanic customs because their descriptions are hopelessly distorted. The Romans applied to the Germans their own classical preconceptions of what barbarian peoples must be like. Archaeology can trace cultural diffusion, but it cannot be used to distinguish between peoples, and should not be used to trace migration.¹⁷ Arguments from language and etymology are irrelevant. The German historians of the nineteenth century were wrong to argue for tribal community and ethnicity on the basis of shared

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- 14 W. Goffart, 'The distant past' (n. 12), pp. 22–37. In fact oral tradition can preserve historical memories over many centuries. For example G.S. Kirk, *The Iliad: a Commentary* 1 (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 8–10, 178–80, and the detailed commentary on 'the Catalogue of Ships'. See also J. Metge, *The Maoris of New Zealand* (London, 1976), pp. 1–2 on Maori traditions of their arrival in New Zealand from Polynesia between 1200 and 1400. Traditional memories undergo continuous transformation, but they still create ethnic identity.
 - 15 A.C. Murray, 'Reinhard Wenskus on Ethnogenesis, Ethnicity and the Origins of the Franks', in Gillett, *On Barbarian Identity* (n. 12), pp. 39–67. In the case of the Franks, lack of ancient foundation legends may be due to their relatively recent (third century) formation. See A. Demandt, 'Die westgermanischen Stammesverbände', *Klio* 75 (1993), pp. 387–406.
 - 16 H. Fix, *Snorri Sturluson: Beiträge zu Werk und Rezeption*, (Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde [RGA] 18; Berlin, 1998), pp. 109–30.
 - 17 S. Brather, 'Ethnic Identities as Constructions of Archaeology: the Case of the Alamanni', in Gillett, *On Barbarian Identity* (n. 12), pp. 149–78.

language, because we now know (so it is argued) that 'before the Carolingian era language was not regarded as a sign of ethnic distinction'.¹⁸

5 What Difference Does it Make Whether these People had Core-Traditions or Not?

The effect of this highly sceptical criticism is to deprive the ancient Germans and their constituent tribes of any continuous identity. This affects our view of Dark Age history in two important ways. First, the post-Roman world becomes, not a joint creation of Roman and Germans, but essentially the product of the Roman world. In a sense, Gillett and his collaborators mark a return to the thinking of Fustel de Coulanges.¹⁹ Second, the events of the Age of Migrations becomes much less understandable. Without the assumption that the *gentes* each had a core of tradition to hold them together, it becomes very difficult to grasp how Vandals, Goths, and Franks over many generations maintained the cohesion and stability, which enabled them to force their way into the Roman Empire, and to establish their kingdoms inside it. These tribes underwent great strains and difficulties. They moved over great distances, suffered famine, experienced defeat in battle, and heavy losses. They became settled and were again uprooted. They merged with other groups. Their leaders died or were assassinated. It is difficult to see how they could overcome such crises if they were not bound together by customs, manners, and beliefs which they, or a significant part of them, held in common.

6 The Theory of Core-Traditions Defended

It is certainly right to be sceptical of much that historians of the 19th and early 20th century have asserted about the culture and ethos of the ancient Germanic tribes. However, I am sure that the total rejection of the notion of *Traditionskern* is mistaken, despite the good sense of many of the arguments put forward in the Gillett volume. I base my thinking on the way these authors have chosen to discuss the theme, which, at least in my opinion, makes it inevi-

18 M. Kulikowski, 'Nation versus Army, a Necessary Contrast?', in Gillett *On Barbarian Identity* (n. 12), pp. 59–84, at 59 n. 2.

19 A.D. Momigliano, "The Ancient City of Fustel de Coulanges", *Rivista Storica Italiana* 87 (1970), pp. 81–98, reprinted in *Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 325–43, esp. 329–30.

table that they would reach the conclusion they do. Rejection of the theory of core traditions is predetermined. Let me take the principal arguments in turn.

6.1 *Arguments from Myths of Origin*

It is assumed that a myth of a common origin, like that of the biblical Israelites, is an essential component of any sense of shared ethnic identity. Murray and Goffart argue that the *gentes* did not have such myths. Murray does indeed show that the Franks probably had no ancient myth relating to their original home and common origin. But he is much less convincing when denying any core-status to stories about the origin of Goths,²⁰ and the Lombards.²¹ In their case, the accounts we have are mixed. They include information drawn from classical writers, material that reflects conditions of the 6th century, and alternative versions which are mutually incompatible. But this shows, not that Goths and Lombards did not have legends of shared origin, but only that their legends were shifting and unstable. It shows that the legends underwent continuous change, just like the society in which they were being handed down from one generation to the next.²² In any case, legends of origin are only one kind of core tradition. Ethnic identity is expressed and transmitted not only through the medium of legends of the group's origin, but is handed on from generation to generation together with language, law, religion, manners, and even dress.

6.2 *Arguments from Religion*

Religion is the most important of all core-traditions. The great bulk of what we know about Germanic religion is derived from the Edda, which received its extant form in Iceland in the thirteenth century. Unfortunately, it is not at all obvious that this is the same religion as that of which we are given hints in the

20 Jordanes, *Getica*, ed. Th. Mommsen, *MGH, Auct. Ant.* 5.1 (Berlin, 1894), translated C.C. Mierow (New York, 1912), pp. 25–28, 79–81, 94–101, 121–22.

21 *Origo gentis Langobardorum*, ed. F. Bluhme and A.E. Boretius, *MGH Leges* 4 (Hanover, 1986), pp. 641–47; Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. G. Waitz and L. Bethmann, *MGH Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum* (Hannover, 1878), pp. 1–16, translated by W.D. Foulke, *Paul the Deacon: History of the Lombards* (Philadelphia, 1974), pp. 1–29.

22 See W. Pohl, 'Ethnicity, Theory and Practice: a Response', in Gillett, *On Barbarian Identity* (n. 12), pp. 221–39, esp. 228–30, gives some quite strong arguments for believing that the legends of Gothic and Lombard origins, as related respectively by Jordanes and Paul the Deacon, do include traditions which are genuinely ethnic, and which go far back in the history of the people.

Germania of Tacitus.²³ We have in fact scarcely any information about the traditional religion of Goths, Vandals or Franks. This appears to justify the critics of the *Traditionskern*, but in fact serves only to show how little we know about the Age of Migrations. That we have no information about the traditional religion of these people does not prove that they did not have one. They would have been unique if they had not.

6.3 *Arguments from Germanic Historical Legends*

The songs with which the ancient Germans recalled their history and celebrated their gods²⁴ have not come down to us. Medieval German and Norse legends do relate to events in fifth and sixth centuries, but for some reason go back no earlier.²⁵ Even in respect of the fifth and sixth centuries, the versions of the legends that have come down to us are very late (13th century),²⁶ and the historical events on which they are based are enormously distorted: Aetius the Roman general and Attila the ruler of the Huns have been fused; Theoderic the great ruler of the Ostrogoths has been transformed into an exile.²⁷ The critics are right to argue that these stories provide a very insecure basis for the reconstruction of a common Germanic culture at the time of the Age of Migrations. The problem is similar to that of reconstructing the culture of the Greeks at the time of the Trojan War from the poems of Homer. But, as with religion, the fact that we know nothing of the third-fifth century Germanic legends is no basis for assuming that there were no such legends, and no tribal cores of tradition.

6.4 *Arguments from Ancient Literature*

Roman literary evidence is by far the most important source of information about the northern barbarians. The opponents of *Traditionskern* systematically disqualify it by treating it with excessive scepticism. Goffart argues that

23 Tacitus, *Germania*, eds. M. Winterbottom and R.M. Ogilvie (Oxford, 1975), 2 (descent from the god Tuisto and his son Mannus); 9 (Hercules, Mercury, Mars: *interpretatio Romano*); 10 (divination); 39 (human sacrifices of Semnones); 40 (tribes worshipping Nerthus or Mother Earth). The Franks are said to have worshipped creatures of woodland and marshes (Greg.T. *Hist. of Franks* 2.9).

24 *Germania* 2.

25 Alaric did not become a legendary figure, Aetius/Attila and of course Theoderic (Dietrich von Bern) did.

26 Alois Wolf, 'Die Verschriftlichung von europäischen Heldensagen als mittelalterliches Kulturproblem', in H. Beck (ed.), *Heldensagen und Heldendichtung im Germanischen Altertum* (Ergänzungsband zum RGA 2, Berlin, 1988), pp. 305–28.

27 E. Marold, 'Wandel und Konstanz in der Darstellung der Figur des Dietrich von Bern', in Beck, *Heldensagen und Heldendichtung* (n. 26), pp. 149–82.

literary analysis of texts and the elucidation of the immediate circumstances and motives of their composition (in modern literary jargon, their 'deconstruction') must precede their exploitation for historical reconstruction. This is incontrovertible. There is also something in his charge that upholders of traditional views of the nature of the Germanic people have mistakenly treated these texts as 'windows into an orally transmitted *Traditionskern*'.²⁸ But such observations do not justify the degree of scepticism which Goffart demands, which comes close to reducing Roman historical accounts of barbarian invaders to fiction. If such scepticism were applied generally, whole stretches of Greek and Roman history would become inaccessible. Literary texts, whether ancient or modern, are generally written for a purpose, and authors have always selected their material to support their authorial 'agenda'. The *Germania* of Tacitus certainly includes statements about the Germans which serve the historian's agenda, the same is of course also true of the modern historians of the Germanic peoples.²⁹ But the *Germania* is not a monolithic text. It includes information of different kinds, and drawn from different sources. The same applies to Dio and Ammianus, and also to Jordanes, Gregory of Tours and Bede. Modern historians are trained to make allowance for the bias of the texts whose information they intend to use, sifting the likely from the improbable or impossible. As for the *gentes*, these peoples were immediate neighbours of the Roman Empire. They provided hostages. They served in the Roman army. It is reasonable to assume that men like Tacitus or Ammianus had quite a lot of genuine information about them, and did not apply to them slavishly the traits of a stereotyped portrait of a barbarian. Against Kulikowski,³⁰ I would insist that even if these sources distort barbarian reality we can make allowance for the distortion and paint a fair, though nothing like complete, picture of what barbarian groups were like.

28 W. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (AD 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton, 1988), especially pp. 3–39; also idem, *Barbarians and Romans 418–584: the Techniques of Accommodation* (Princeton, 1980), pp. 16–30.

29 As Goffart says of Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon: 'Without saying so, each was preoccupied with current problems, and conjured up a past carefully tailored to bear on the local circumstances of his public and himself', *Narrators of Barbarian History* (n. 28), p. 433.

30 Kulikowski, 'Nation Versus Army' (n. 18), p. 71. Tacitus certainly applied quite sensitive criteria to the identification of ethnicity: see W. Pohl, 'Telling the Difference—Signs of Ethnic Identity', in Pohl and Reimitz (eds.), *Strategies of Distinction*, pp. 17–69, at p. 18.

6.5 *Arguments from Archaeology*

If one insists that archaeology must be a self-sufficient science, then it does indeed become impossible to establish the existence or the extent of settlement of tribal groups from archaeological evidence. But in some areas archaeologists and historians working on literary sources can collaborate, and through collaboration solve problems which they have not been able to solve working on their own. I suggest that the history of the barbarians who invaded the Empire is a prime area for such cooperation.³¹ To insist that the spreading of artifacts of a particular kind must always be due to trade or cultural diffusion, and cannot be evidence of migration or conquest, is sheer dogmatism, or rather it is dogmatism based on ideology: in the past, insistence that only one kind of explanation is valid has been closely linked to political ideology.³²

6.6 *Arguments from Language, Place Names, and Personal Names*

The opponents of *Traditionskern* are extremely critical of the use of arguments from language in discussion of the nature of these peoples. This is understandable because some of the worst excesses of *Germanische Altertumskunde*, notably the positing of an Aryan race, were the result of misuse of etymology. Nevertheless, a shared language, even if it was not considered a sign of ethnic distinction, must have been an important factor in the history of the Germanic tribes. Common sense tells us that nothing is more helpful to cooperative behaviour of human beings, and to group formation, than sharing a common language. That is why Isidore of Seville said that 'peoples arise from languages, not languages from people'.³³ Though he also admits that there are more people than languages,³⁴ so that language alone does not establish

31 See for instance F. Daim, 'Avars and Avar Archaeology', in Goetz, Jarnut, and Pohl, *Regna and Gentes*, (n. 6), pp. 463–570, which complements W. Pohl, 'A non-Roman Empire in Central Europe: the Avars (history)', in Goetz, Jarnut, and Pohl, *Regna and Gentes*, pp. 571–95. Another example: F. Siegmund, *Alemannen und Franken* (Berlin – New York, 2000).

32 H. Härke: 'Archaeologists and Migrations: a Problem of Attitude?' *Current Archaeology* 32 (1997), pp. 1–32, shows how one-sided insistence of archaeologists, whether on the decisive influence of migration, or on that of cultural diffusion between immobile populations has been related to the scholars' national or political ideologies. So our age of the welfare state stresses the importance of peaceful internal change, while that of colonialism emphasized the importance of invasion and conquest.

33 Isidore, *Etymologiarum sive originum libri*, 9.1.14: *Quia ex linguis gentes, non ex gentibus linguae exortae sunt* (because people (*gentes*) derive from languages, not languages from people).

34 Ibid. 9.1.1: *Initio autem quot gentes, tot linguae fuerunt, deinde plures gentes quam linguae*. (In the beginning there were as many languages as peoples (*gentes*), later more

a *gens*, I would insist that shared language, even if split into dialects, must have greatly assisted the processes of ethnogenesis which we observe in the Late Roman world. When the Goths settled in the Empire the Gothic Bible became a core tradition. While we know of no corresponding literary work for any of the other tribes, there is other linguistic evidence. The interpretation of such evidence is far more complicated than was once assumed,³⁵ but it is evidence that to a considerable extent goes back to the period under investigation. Arguments from place names that there was significant Frankish settlement between Seine and Loire have been discredited,³⁶ but this was because the evidence was misinterpreted, not because place names are irrelevant to the history of settlement. It is perverse to reject place names as evidence for settlement on principle.³⁷ Personal names, as found in literary sources and legal documents, throw light on the social structure, that is, on the relative positions occupied by barbarians and Roman provincials in the kingdoms. For instance, it is surely significant that the overwhelming majority of the *fideles* who witnessed royal signature on Merovingian *diplomata*,³⁸ and the *illustres* who signed the reports of the ecclesiastical councils in Visigothic Spain, have Germanic names.³⁹

people than languages.) But curiously Isidore does not seem to have been aware that the Germanic tribes (*Germanicae gentes*) spoke the same language: *gentes ... linguas dissonas* (peoples differing in language, *ibid.* 9.2.98.), though Tacitus had known this (*Germania* 43, 46).

- 35 D. Greunich, W. Haubrichs, J. Jarnut (eds.), *Nomen et Gens, zur historischen Aussagekraft frühmittelalterlicher Personennamen* (Ergänzungsband zum RGA 16; Berlin – New York, 1997), introduces a project of research on these names.
- 36 H. Fehr, 'Volkstum als Paradigm: Germanic People and Gallo-Romans in Early Medieval Archaeology since the 1930s', in Gillett, *On Barbarian Identity* (n. 12), pp. 178–99, relevant pp. 192–93.
- 37 See for instance its use to elucidate the ethnogenesis of the Welsh by A. Wolf in 'The Britons: from Romans to Barbarians', in Goetz, Jarnut, and Pohl, *Regna and Gentes* (n. 6), pp. 345–80, esp. 373–79. Also M. Rouche, *L'Aquitaine des Wisigoths aux Arabes 418–761* (Paris, 1979), pp. 136–44; W. Haubrichs, 'Fränkische Lehnwörter, Ortsnamen und Personennamen im Nordosten der Gallia', in D. Greunich (ed.), *Die Franken und die Alemannen bis zur Schlacht bei Zülpich (496–97)* (Ergänzungsband zum RGA 19; Berlin – New York, 1998), pp. 102–29.
- 38 G.H. Pertz (ed.) *MGH Diplomata* 1 (Hannover, 1872, repr. 1965), p. 21, no. 19 (653 CE); p. 38, no. 40 (662 CE); p. 58, no. 60 (693 CE).
- 39 K. Zeuner (ed.), *MGH Leges* 1 (Hannover-Leipzig, 1902), pp. 485–86.

6.7 *Arguments from Law*

The opponents of ethnogenesis make practically no use of legal evidence. But the barbarian kingdoms, especially those of the Visigoths, Franks, and Lombards, have left us a considerable body of law. Law and custom are fundamental core traditions. It is not easy to separate traditional ethnic legal concepts from concepts that were adopted from the Roman world, or developed after the establishment of the kingdoms, but some traditional and non-Roman characteristics can be distinguished.⁴⁰ Furthermore, though both the Lombard and the Frankish laws have come to us in Latin, they make use of ethnic technical terms which are certainly not translations of Latin concepts, and which reflect a court procedure carried out in vernacular tongues, and employing formulae which have no parallel in Roman law.⁴¹ Most strikingly, all these laws reflect societies in which judicial system takes into account the concept of the blood feud, in that the judicial procedure gives an individual who has injured another an opportunity to pay composition to the injured party, and so to avoid retaliation by the injured person's kin.⁴² This is quite different from the Roman court procedure. Neither blood feud nor composition (payment made to injured parties in place of retaliation) have a place in the Roman settlement of disputes, but they frequently occur in Germanic myths and legends, and in Tacitus' account of German customs.⁴³ In this respect, the legal evidence appears to confirm the existence of significant core traditions.

40 H. Nehlsen, *Sklavenrecht zwischen Antike und Mittelalter; germanisches und römisches Recht in den germanischen Rechtsaufzeichnungen: Ostgoten, Westgoten, Franken, Langobarden* (Göttingen, 1971).

41 R. Schmidt-Wiegand, 'Die Malburgischen Glossen, eine frühe Überlieferung germanischer Rechtssprache', in H. Beck (ed.), *Germanische Rest- und Trümmersprachen* (Ergänzungsband zum RGA 3; Berlin – New York, 1989), pp. 157–74.

42 So already Tacitus, *Germania* 21: 'A man is bound to take up the feuds ... of father or kinsman. Even homicide can be atoned for by a fixed number of cattle or sheep, and the satisfaction received by the whole of the family'.

43 P. Wormald, 'The *Leges Barbarorum*: Law and Ethnicity in the post-Roman West', in Goetz, Jarnut, and Pohl, *Regna and Gentes* (n. 6), pp. 21–53.

7 The Problem of the *Germani*: Ancient Authors on *Germani*, the *Gentes*, and their sub-Tribes

What the Roman authors tell us about the ethnicity⁴⁴ of the Germanic tribes is not obviously distorted, though it amounts to very much less than we would like to know. As far as the Romans were concerned, all these northern barbarians were 'Germans'. However the word '*Germani*' is Latin not Germanic. What this suggests is that the Romans, (that is as far as our sources are concerned, Caesar and Tacitus), thought the various peoples north of the Rhine were recognisably different from the Gauls, and needed a separate name. Caesar and Tacitus certainly thought that the people they called Germans shared elements of a common culture. Tacitus certainly knew that they shared a language. But neither Caesar nor Tacitus provide explicit evidence that the various German *gentes* were united by political institutions of any kind. We cannot of course know whether or not these people felt any sense of Germanic solidarity, or to use modern jargon, a sense of Germanic identity. But the fact that the Latin *Germani* does not appear to have had a Germanic equivalent, strongly suggests that there was no generally shared sense of Germanic identity.

In the course of fourth century the Germanic tribes come to play an ever growing part in Roman history. Roman authors generally refer to them and their members by their tribal name, whether that of the major tribe (e.g. Goth, Frank or Alamann), or of the sub-tribe (e.g. Salian or Chamavian or Bucinobant). But on the evidence of Ammianus, these people were still described collectively as Germans.⁴⁵ In the fifth century, when the *gentes* were establishing kingdoms within the Empire, their members, whether as individuals or collectively, are almost invariably defined by their ethnic name. They are sometimes described as barbarians, but not as German. Nor is there any evidence that the *gentes* described themselves as German.

44 Distortion is likely in some of the accounts of the size and danger of ethnic bands, which are exaggerated to the greater glory of the Roman victors, or simply to justify Roman campaigns. See J. Drinkwater, 'Ammianus, Valentinian and the Rhine-Germans', in J.W. Drijvers and D. Hunt (eds.), *The Late Roman World and its Historian: Interpreting Ammianus Marcellinus* (London, 1989), pp. 127–37; idem, 'The "Germanic Threat" on the Rhine Frontier: a Gallo-Roman Artefact?' in R.W. Mathisen and H.S. Sivan (eds.), *Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 20–30; idem, 'Julian and the Franks and Valentinian and the Alamanni', in *Francia* 24 (1997), pp. 1–15; idem, *The Alamanni and Rome 213–496*, (Caracalla to Clovis) Oxford 2007, 12–14, 141–144.

45 Ammianus Marcellinus, with an English translation by J.C. Rolfe (3 vols.; London – Cambridge, MA, 1950–1952), 20.3.3, 8.6; 21.11.2, 13.3; 25.4.10, 6.13; 26.5.12; 27.2.3.; 31.10.5, 5.16.

But even if the different *gentes* did not share a sense of German identity, they did share a language, or at least spoke closely related dialects. In addition the evidence of the law codes and of grave goods shows that they had important cultural elements in common. It is surely quite arbitrary to assume that all that was un-Roman in the *regna* must have come into existence under the influence of Romanity, before or after the settlement of the *gentes* in the empire. It is much more likely that the common language and culture of the *gentes* made a significant contribution to the new world that was coming into existence under their leadership. That is why the concept of 'Germanic' remains useful, even indispensable.⁴⁶

There remains the problem of the relationship of the major peoples of the Age of Migrations to their sub-tribes. The Goths, Vandals, and Burgundians go back to the Early Empire, while the Alamanni, and the Franks seem to have come into being only in the course of the third century. But all these 'major' peoples were made up of sub-tribes, with names and rulers of their own, and even in the fourth century when the Romans came into contact with them, in peace or war, within or beyond the frontiers of the empire, they normally dealt with the sub-tribes, not the major *gentes*. So when Julian campaigned against the Alamanni across the Rhine his named opponents were kings,⁴⁷ ruling over *pagi*,⁴⁸ which may or may not have been the same as sub-tribes.⁴⁹ Similarly when Julian fought Franks in what is now northern France and Belgium his enemies were Salii and Chamavi.⁵⁰ All these sub-groups were evidently independent political units, even though they were also in some sense components of one of the major people, and could—and did—combine for joint military action.⁵¹ Moreover we know of the Alamanni that they distinguished

46 Another view: W. Pohl, 'Vom Nutzen des Germanen Begriffes', in D. Hägermann et al. (eds.), *Akkulturation* (Ergänzungsband zum RGA 41; Berlin, 2004), pp. 18–34.

47 Seven Alamannic kings fought at battle of Strasbourg, Ammianus 16.12.1; cf. also references to kings in 17.1.13, 10.3.5; 18.2.3.

48 Ammianus 17.10.5; 20.21.3.

49 Ammianus 31.10.2: *Lentienses Alamannicus populous*; 29.47: *Bucinobantes...gens Alamannica*.

50 Ammianus 17.8.3; 20.21.3, cf. on Frankish sub-tribes and kings towards the end of the 4th century, Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum*, eds. B. Krusch and W. Levison, *MGH Scriptorum rerum Merovingicarum* 1 (2nd ed.; Hanover, 1937–1951), translated L. Thorpe, *Gregory of Tours: History of the Franks* (Harmondsworth, 1974), 2.9 pp. 120–23.

51 But note that the Alamannic army defeated by Julian at Strasburg had been raised partly by pay, partly by treaty of mutual assistance (Ammianus 16.12.26: *partim mercede, partim pacto vicissitudinis reddendae*).

themselves from the Burgundians, the border between the two peoples being marked by boundary stones.⁵²

In our sources the names of the major peoples Goths, Alamanni, Franks, Vandals occur above all in two main contexts: when the name of a major tribe is used to describe a band of raiders or invaders inside the Empire; and to indicate the origin of individuals serving in the Roman army. It would therefore appear that the wider tribal allegiance was most conspicuous in war, above all in offensive war fought by the sub-tribes in confederation, and not when these people were defending their home territories. The identity of the major tribe was also activated when individuals had left their homelands to enter the service of the Empire, where they would serve in the company of members of other sub-tribes of their own *gens*, or of other major *gentes*.⁵³ It is therefore clear that the sub-groups of Goths, Franks, Vandals etc. did share a sense of kinship and mutual solidarity with other sub-groups of their *gens*, though we still have very little knowledge of the loyalties, customs, and beliefs on which this was based.

8 Conclusions

It is certainly true that the ethnicities of Late Antiquity were historical entities, originating in particular historical situations, and undergoing continuous transformation for as long as they existed. But continuous transformation is not incompatible with the possession of core-traditions. The various Germanic tribes possessed such traditions, and these tradition made it possible for these groups to function as effective units, and to survive from generation to generation. Some traditions, especially language, all the tribes had in common. Others were more specific. They underwent continuous modification and change, just as the tribes did, but at any moment each people possessed a certain store of traditional culture which one generation could hand on to the next. In my opinion the arguments of opponents of the *Traditionskern* theory are flawed because they depend on a dogmatic and selective use of the evidence. I am not claiming that there was after all a Germanic culture, continuing without

⁵² Ammianus 18.15.2.

⁵³ The above view of the relationship between tribe and sub-tribe comes out particularly clearly in Ammianus' description of Julian's encounters with Franks and Vandals, but in 376 the Goths too consisted of Tervingi and Greutungi, and in 408 the Vandals of Hastingi and Silingi. The sub-tribes of Goths and Vandals were far more formidable than those of the Franks and Alamanni, but the basic relationship may well have been the same.

interruption from prehistory to modern times, and a fundamental national character (*Geist*) that was not affected by historical change. My point is rather that we have enough evidence to show that the tribes of the Age of Migration did have their own evolving traditions, and that it is reasonable to assume that these ethnic traditions made a significant contribution to the making of Medieval Europe.

To demolish the view that the Dark Age tribes had an identity based on ethnic core-traditions, the authors of the Gillett volume devote a great deal of energy to disqualifying the scholarship of earlier generations as distorted by mainly nationalist ideology. Yet they show no awareness that their own positions are very strongly ideological, deriving from the rejection of nationalism and the acceptance of multiculturalism, that are conspicuous features of current western values, and which find practical expression, among other things, in the downgrading of national patriotism in the interest of the European ideal. My own ideology is that the possession of shared traditions of one kind or another is necessary for the functioning and survival of any human society.

Making a Gothic History: Does the *Getica* of Jordanes Preserve Genuinely Gothic Traditions?*,¹

The nature of the *gentes* that destroyed or, as some would prefer, transformed the Roman Empire has been the object of much recent scholarly discussion. How far were these peoples actually created within the Roman world? It is clear that once they entered the empire they took up very many elements of the culture of the empire, most obviously religion and language. An alternative and older view is that the *gentes* had much longer histories, and that their identities, that is their consciousness of being respectively Goths or Vandals, or Franks, or whatever, had developed well before, in some cases centuries before, they had contact with the Romans, and that their history within the boundaries of the empire was merely a continuation of much longer, scarcely documented history. In this view, the size, importance, and composition of a *gens* might change a great deal under the impact of historical exigencies. But the cohesion and solidarity of the group was preserved by a body of customs and core traditions that was passed from generation to generation.² This study is intended to support the second view, that the Goths were a *gens* when they entered the empire.

The nature of these core traditions has been much discussed and their very existence denied. The problem is that that before they entered the empire the *gentes* were illiterate, and that even after they had come into contact with the Romans and settled inside the empire, our information about them is overwhelmingly derived from Roman sources, which tell us what the Romans thought and felt about these barbarian people, but not what they felt about themselves. This is what makes the *Gothic History* of Jordanes so interesting: it is a history of the Gothic people written by someone who was almost

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1 Although I do not agree with many of his conclusions, W. Goffart's "Jordanes and his Three Histories," in *The Narrators of Barbarian History, Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede and Paul the Deacon (AD 550–800)* (Princeton, 1988), 20–111, is basic.

2 So R. Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung, das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen gentes* (Cologne/Graz, 1961).

certainly a Goth.³ Here, if anywhere, we can expect to find traces of the core traditions of the Goths. Goffart and his school, however, have produced plausible arguments that we should have no such expectations, that the *Getica* do not in fact include any core traditions. Against that view, this study argues that some genuine traditions about the history of the Goths before they entered the empire can indeed be found in the *Getica*. But first there is a question: Where did Jordanes find his material?

How Close is Jordanes' *Getica* to the *Origines* of Cassiodorus?

Jordanes tells us that he has been asked to condense in his own style, in a small book, the twelve books⁴ of a history of the Getae written by Cassiodorus Senator, which describes the origins and deeds of the Goths from the earliest times to the present day descending through the generation of kings. A very hard task.⁵ We have a text that gives a brief summary. According to this source, Cassiodorus told of the origins, habitations (*loca*), and character (*mores*) of the Goths.⁶ These three themes do indeed run through Jordanes' Gothic history. The question remains whether Jordanes was in a position to produce a summary that was close to the original. He tells us that he did not have a copy of

3 It has been questioned whether Jordanes was of Gothic descent. But his claim that he has not included inauthentic material favoring the people that he was writing about ("praedictae gentis quasi ex ipsa trahenti originem") must surely mean that he has written without favoritism about his own people. For *quasi* in sense of *ut pote* without any implication of conditionality see also *Getica* 103. Alanoviamuth, the name of Jordanes' father (unless corrupted), and the fact that Jordanes' grandfather was *notarius* of Candac, a leader of the Alans, and that Jordanes himself had been *notarius* of a nephew of Candac (*Getica* 266), show that he also had close links with the Alans.

4 How long were the twelve books? Goffart, "Jordanes," 39, points out that if the books were of the same length as the ten books of Eutropius, Cassiodorus' *Origines* would have been four times as long as the *Getica*. If his books were as long as the books of Livy, Cassiodorus' work would have been very much longer still, and Jordanes' task of abbreviation correspondingly harder.

5 "Getica ut nostris verbis duodecem volumina Senatoris de origine actusque Getharum ab olim et usque nunc per generationes regesque coartem." On the identification of Getae and Gothi see below nn. 73–77. Jordanes accepts this identification. His history is indeed entitled *De origine actibusque Getarum* or short *Getica*, but he himself generally describes the *gens* as Gothi.

6 *Ordo generis Cassiodori*, CCSI. 96 (Turnhout, 1973), vi; tr. in S.J.B. Barnish, *Cassiodorus: Variae* (Liverpool, 1992) xxxvi–xxxvii.

Cassiodorus' work in front of him when he made his epitome, but he claims that he remembers its contents very well:

I have before this time (*ante hac*) reread⁷ the books lent me by his steward for a three-day reading. The words I recall not, but the sense and the deeds related I think I retain entire.⁸ To this I have added fitting matters from some Greek and Latin authors. I have also put in an introduction and conclusion and have inserted many things of my own authorship.⁹

The precise interpretation of this statement is difficult. How close is the story as told by Jordanes to that of the work he claims to be summarizing? Given the circumstances described, how accurately could Jordanes have remembered the sense and contents of Cassiodorus' work, and how extensive are the additions that he states that he has made? To answer these questions precisely we need a lot of information that we will never have. The *Getica* has much detail, of a kind that one would think would be difficult to remember for any length of time. How good was Jordanes' memory? How long was the interval between Jordanes' rereading of Cassiodorus' *Origins* and his decision to start on his shortened version? Did he take written notes? There has been an enormous amount of work on Jordanes, and recent scholars have provided widely differing interpretations of what Jordanes has told us about his methodology.

Of recent critics Goffart has been the most skeptical. He points out that the language, imagery, and substance of Jordanes' preface is closely modelled on the introduction of Rufinus to his translation of Origen's *Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans*. He goes on to argue that by his conspicuous (although unacknowledged) allusions to Rufinus, Jordanes means to tell us that "he has blended one main source with a series of minor sources into what is basically a new work."¹⁰ This seems to be over-ingenious. When comparing the two closely related texts, we should consider the differences as well as the similarities. Rufinus tells us that he could not obtain copies of part of Origen's work, and therefore had to improvise as best as he could what was missing; Jordanes tells us that he has seen the whole work, although it was not available to him at

7 *Relegi*: "Read again" seems to be the central meaning of *relegere*. The interpretation here is that Jordanes had read Cassiodorus' work for the first time quite long ago, and that Castalius knew that he had read it when he asked Jordanes to produce an epitome. Jordanes has refreshed his memory more recently, and hurriedly, and probably only after he received Castalius' request.

8 "*Quorum quamvis verba non recolo, sensus tamen et res actas credo me integro retinere.*"

9 *Getica* 2–3.

10 Goffart, "Jordanes," 60.

the time of writing, that he could not recall Cassiodorus' wording, but that he retained the general sense and the deeds related by Cassiodorus entirely.¹¹ The obvious implication of this statement is that Jordanes' abbreviation retains the basic structure and themes of Cassiodorus' work, but that the reader will also find both additions to and departures from Cassiodorus' original.

The Structure of the *Getica*

Any attempt to reconstruct how various bits and pieces of information got into the works of Cassiodorus and Jordanes, whether they accessed their sources at first, second, or whatever hand, must be speculative.¹² Jordanes *Gothic History* does, however, have an easily described structure. The history has a preface and a brief epilogue. The main body of the work is made up of narrative, which is regularly interrupted by excursuses describing the topography and ethnography of the region in which the action of the narrative takes place. The history of the Goths as related in the narrative falls into a succession of quite distinct phases. First there is the story of how the Goths migrated from Scandinavia to a region on north of the Black Sea, bordering on the Sea of Azov. This is followed by a long section describing activities involving various "Scythians," mainly in the eastern Balkans but also in Asia Minor, all of whom the author assumes (or at least professes to assume) to have been Goths. This section is largely derived from Greek authors, writing in the centuries before the Common Era, and it clearly interrupts the first narrative. This "Scytho-Gothic prehistory" is followed by a second passage about the Goths settled near the Sea of Azov. This is preceded by a pedigree of the Amal family, that is the family of Theoderic, the great Gothic ruler of Italy, whom Cassiodorus served as a minister.

The narrative then goes on to tell how the Goths, now divided into Ostrogoths ruled by the Amali, and Visigoths ruled by the Balthi, but still neighbors and, in a sense that is not at all made clear, still a single group, interacted with the Romans. This phase of Gothic history was ended around 370 CE by the coming of the Huns, which (according to Jordanes) caused the two sections of Goths to move apart, and to have largely distinct histories. The Visigoths entered the empire and eventually set up a kingdom in Gaul; the Ostrogoths remained in the Balkans until in 489, when, under their king Theoderic, they moved into Italy and set up the Ostrogothic kingdom. Jordanes deals with the separate histories of Visigoths and Ostrogoths in successive sections of the *Getica*, taking

11 Cited above.

12 No detailed commentary seems to exist. One would be useful.

the Visigoths first. Each section ends with the destruction of its Gothic kingdom. The history concludes with a brief postscript. This is the basic structure of Jordanes' *Getica*; and if we allow any credibility at all to what Jordanes tells us about his procedure, we must assume that the fundamental structure of the *Getica* is the same as that of the *Origines* of Cassiodorus.

Ablabius and the Making of a History of the Goths

As one of the sources of his narrative Jordanes mentions a certain Ablabius whom he praises as *Gothorum gentis descriptor egregius*.¹³ Unfortunately we know nothing about Ablabius' *History* except what Jordanes tells us that he learnt from it. Jordanes cites the work three times. Two of the citations refer to the settlement of the Goths along the Maeotic Sea, today the Sea of Azov. But the third is in the context of a war between king Ermanaric and the Heruls,¹⁴ that is, to events of the mid-fourth century CE. There is no reason why Ablabius should have stopped his history in the middle of the fourth century. So he probably covered the whole history of the Goths' history from their legendary departure from Scandinavia and their arrival in eastern Pontus to his own times.¹⁵ We know of no other ancient study of Gothic history. It is therefore likely that Ablabius' *History of the Goths* was the first ever to be compiled. That Jordanes does not mention Ablabius more often, and not at all in the later and more historical part of his *Getica*, is perhaps due to the fact that Ablabius' history had been superseded by the hugely expanded version of Cassiodorus. But Jordanes certainly did consult Ablabius at first hand. For, as we will see, references to Ablabius bracket the "Scytho-Gothic" narrative of Cassiodorus, and so signal that it interrupts the original narrative of Ablabius. Jordanes only could have recognised this fact if he knew both texts.

13 *Getica* 28. The Ms have *Ablabius* (nominative), which is not grammatical. T. Mommsen (*MGH AA* 5.1.xxxvii) assumes that Jordanes wrote *Ablabii descriptoris Gothorum gentis egregii verissima historia*. Ablabius is referred to as *storicus*, *ibid.* 82.

14 *Getica* 117. Mommsen and Mierow thought that this passage is probably derived from the Greek historian Dexippus, but that would not make it less likely that Jordanes found it in Ablabius. Neither Ablabius, nor anybody else, would have been able to write a more or less continuous history of the Goths without using Roman and Greek sources.

15 This, with the (highly debatable) modification that Ababius wrote a history of only the Visigoths, is fully argued by R. Hachmann, *Die Goten und Skandinavien* (Berlin, 1970), 68–75; extracts argued by him to derive from Ablabius quoted *ibid.* 487–98.

Constructing a History of the Goths: Ablabius' Sources

It would seem to have been Ablabius who laid the foundations of Gothic history by combining some ethnic traditions with a lot of material from Roman historians,¹⁶ as was already suggested by Mommsen.¹⁷ The Goths did have traditions about their past. As they were a society without writing before they became part of the Roman world, their traditions had to be passed on from generation to generation by word of mouth. We are told that they had songs about the great deeds of ancestors. Eterpamara, Hanala, Fritigern, and Vidigoia, are mentioned.¹⁸ We are also told that the defeat of a people called the Spali, and the occupation by the Goths of the land in the remotest parts of Scythia, were commemorated in songs, almost as in a history.¹⁹ The last named episode involved the story of the Gothic migration under king Filimer, their fifth king, from Gothiscandza, in today's Poland, to the northern shores of the Black Sea, to settle around the Sea of Azov (Lake Maeotis), crossing a great river on the way. The song or songs presumably covered the whole migration under that king's leadership.²⁰

If there were songs about the movement of the Goths from the Baltic to the Black Sea under king Filimer, it is likely that they also had songs about the migration of the Goths from the isle of Scandza (Scandinavia), their crossing the Baltic in three ships,²¹ their first settlement in Gothiscandza under the leadership of king Berig, and also that they had traditions about the four generations of kings who are said to have ruled the Goths in Gothiscandza, whom Jordanes does not name, but about whom he evidently had some information.²² Jordanes' *Getica* also has preserved traces of other myths. Gapt, who appears to have originally been worshipped as a god, has been inserted into the line of human ancestors of the Amal family.²³ And Jordanes tells us that he knows, but rejects, a story that the Goths were once redeemed from

16 See below.

17 Mommsen *MGH AA* 5.1.xxvii–xxxix.

18 *Getica* 43. It is a pity Jordanes does not quote from the songs. Perhaps they were transmitted only orally. Jordanes tells us that preferred to believe what he had read (*Getica* 38).

19 *Getica* 28. Presumably this migration was mentioned in the songs celebrating its leader Filimer, son of Gadaric.

20 *Getica* 25–29.

21 *Ibid.* 94.

22 *Ibid.* 25–28, unless they had been invented by Cassiodorus.

23 Wolfram, *History of the Goths* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 1988), 27, 31. Gapt figured in legends; “ut in suis fabulis referunt”: *Getica* 79.

slavery for the price of a horse.²⁴ This was perhaps an etymological myth that originated to explain that the Gothic name might be understood to mean “the horse people.”²⁵ Jordanes also alludes to some probably not very ancient stories, telling of the origin of the Gepids and the Huns, alleging that both peoples were kinsmen, if discreditable kinsmen, of the Goths.²⁶

The Fritigern said to have been remembered in song was surely the victor of the battle of Adrianople in 378. So new songs were still being composed even after the Goths had entered the empire, as indeed they were to honor the Visigothic king Theoderic I, after he had been killed in the battle of Châlons in 451.²⁷ Songs also were composed about the war between Goths and Huns after the death of Attila, for a poem about the victory of Goths over Huns found its way to Iceland where, as late as the thirteenth century, it was incorporated into the saga of king Heidrek the Wise.²⁸ The composing of heroic songs thus was a folk tradition that the Goths shared with other Germanic peoples and that remained alive in the north at least as late as the thirteenth century.

It is therefore practically certain that stories about the migration were passed from generation to generation in heroic song; and as these stories have no links with any events in Greco-Roman history, they are extremely unlikely to have been derived from any Greco-Roman source. Moreover, because the kings reported to have led the migration are assigned to neither the Amals nor the Balthi, they are not likely to have been invented to glorify the families of either Alaric or Theoderic. That the stories about the migration—unlike the Scytho-Getic excursus of Cassiodorus—seem to have nothing to do with the classical Mediterranean world makes it unlikely that they originated when the Goths were already part of that world. These stories are therefore properly Gothic and early. Even though there is no evidence to show how early they,

24 *Getica* 38.

25 J. Svennung, *Jordanes und Scandia* (Stockholm, 1967), 236–40. *Goti* = horse (originally name of a particular horse), so also Wolfram, *History*, 26.

26 *Getica* 95 (Gepids), 121 (Huns). Both stories are based on Germanic etymologies and are therefore properly “Gothic,” dating presumably from the mid-fourth century CE when Huns and Goths had clashed. The hero Vidigoia, commemorated in song (43), treacherously killed by Sarmatians, and buried somewhere in Dacia (178), is presumably also to be dated in the third or fourth century CE.

27 *Getica* 214.

28 See *Saga of King Heidrek the Wise*, text, translation, introduction, and notes, C. Tolkien, ed., tr. (Edinburgh/Toronto/New York, 1960), xxi–xxvii, 52–58. So also the story that Ermanaric had Sunilda torn apart by wild horses, and was in revenge killed by her brothers (*Getica* 129), reappears in the Norse saga of Hamdir. See H. Beck, “Ermanarich Sagensgeschichtliches,” *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde* 7 (Berlin, 1989), 512–15.

or rather their different components, might be, they would seem at the very least to reflect what Goths in the fifth century CE thought about the origins of their people.

Myths and legends do not of give us an accurate picture of historical events. The French-speaking Normans who conquered England were already very different from their Norse-speaking Viking ancestors. Orally transmitted myth may be based on history but it also transforms it. The *Nibelungenlied* has merged Attila the king of the Huns and Aëtius the Roman general. Dietrich von Bern of German legend is scarcely recognizable as his historic counterpart, the great Theoderic. The detail of the Heidrek Saga does not bear much resemblance to what Jordanes tells us about the wars between Huns and Goths in the fifth century. But most of these legends have after all a traceable link to historical events, even if they also involve the fusion of different folk memories in the course of ethnogenesis. The Gothic myths too are likely to be unreliable guides as to what actually happened, although this need not mean that the Scandinavian origin,²⁹ and the migration across eastern Europe must be totally rejected.

That the myths did indeed have some historical basis is suggested by the fact that Ptolemy located Gutai on the island of Scandia (that is, in Scandinavia),³⁰ and that Strabo and Tacitus place a people known as Gutones, whose name suggests that they may be identical with, or perhaps only related to the Gutai, along the Vistula, in today's Poland.³¹ These passages, which have been much discussed, do suggest that the process of evolution, that is the ethnogenesis, of our Goths took place along the geographical route that the Goths remembered in their legends. It is extremely unlikely that the Goths, or indeed other Germanic *gentes* within the empire, had no recollection whatsoever of their earlier history and culture.

29 *Getica* 22: Gautigothi; 23 Ostrogothi. Svennung, *Jordanes und Scandia*, Stockholm 1967, accepts the story of Scandinavian origin as both "echte Volks Überlieferung," and as historical: pp. 209–35, and proposes locations for the peoples bearing Gothic names. Hachmann, *Goten und Skandinavien*, Berlin 1970, 109–35, 466–67, is skeptical, but allows that the Scandinavian origin cannot be disproved. The shared name certainly suggests some kind of link.

30 Gutai in Scandia: Ptolemy, *Geographia* 2.11.16; Jordanes cites Ptolemy, but not the reference to the Gutai. But his list of peoples inhabiting Scandza, including Gauthigoths and Ostrogoths (22–23), is derived from another source, perhaps a map (so Mommsen, *MGH AA* 5.1.xxxi–xxxiii).

31 Gutones: Ptolemy, 3.5.8; Strabo, 7.1.3. Gotones: Tacitus *Germ.* 43.23; *Annales* 2.62.2 The elder Pliny, 4.99, makes the Gutones a subgroup of the Vandals who were settled in Silesia.

A history of the Goths, however, could not have been constructed from songs alone. For if we define history as a succession of reliably documented and dated events, it is clear that we have no history of the Goths before they came into contact with the Romans in the Gothic wars of the mid-third century. From that time Ablabius, and after him Cassiodorus and Jordanes, had information about activities of the Goths which could be dated, and set in a historical context. But this information is largely concerned with interaction between Goths and the empire, or at least it is all of a kind that would be of interest to a Roman historian of the empire. It is in fact clear that most of the factual material of this history is derived directly, or indirectly, from Roman historians, including Dexippus, Ammianus, Eutropius, Orosius,³² and Priscus. It would appear that the Goths, as late as the fourth and fifth centuries, even after they had entered the empire, were not interested in writing their own history. So Jordanes and his predecessors evidently could find no information about the early life and rise to power of even so important a leader as Alaric.³³ For Jordanes' account of Alaric's campaigns is incomplete and inaccurate. Although it is clearly written with sympathy for the Gothic point of view, in that Alaric and his Goths are generally shown to have been in the right, and the Romans in the wrong,³⁴ it nevertheless reads like a summary—a very indifferent summary—of Roman historians.³⁵

From mid-third century we do however have some information that probably comes from Gothic sources: references to wars between the Goths and other barbarian peoples without any involvement of the Roman Empire. Such is the victory of Ostrogotha over the Gepids in the mid-third century,³⁶ that of Geberich over the Vandals in the early fourth century,³⁷ that of Ermanaric over the Heruls and others around the mid-fourth century,³⁸ and the wars of Vinitharius, Hunimund, and Thorismund against various barbarian peoples in the Balkans, which Jordanes sets in the late fourth to early fifth centuries, but

32 *Getica* 121 has verbal echoes of Orosius 33.10.

33 According to Jordanes (*Getica* 146) Alaric was proclaimed king in the fourth year of Theodosius, i.e., in 383, according to Isidore of Seville, *Historia de regibus Gothorum, Vandalorum et Suevorum*, 12, in K.B. Wolf, tr., *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain* (Liverpool, 1999), only after the death of Theodosius (i.e., after 394 CE). There evidently was no agreed Gothic version of the life of Alaric.

34 E.g., *Getica* 146, Goths deprived of customary gifts; 154, treachery of Stilicho; 156, Goths refrain from burning Rome and spare churches.

35 See Goffart, "Jordanes," 64, for some blunders.

36 *Getica* 90.

37 *Getica* 113–15.

38 *Getica* 116.

which in fact seem to have happened around forty years later.³⁹ This means that Jordanes' history of the Ostrogoths in the early fifth century has a gap of forty years.⁴⁰ But it would seem that practically all we know about these barbarian wars are the names of the king who led the Gothic forces, and the names of his opponents. What interested the Goths about their history, even at that late stage, was the heroic leadership of their kings, not the issues over which the wars were fought, or the dates when they were fought. They were not in fact concerned to remember the details that are needed to turn a heroic tale into historiography, whether as understood by classical or by modern historians. The encounters between the empire and the two rival Gothic hosts led by respectively Theoderic, son of Strabo, and Theoderic, the Amal, that occupy much of Malchus' history scarcely figure in the *Getica* of Jordanes.⁴¹ It was by combining these extremely fragmentary Gothic folk memories with the much fuller, and dated, information of Roman historians that Ablabius and his successors were able to construct a history of the Gothic people around the families of the Amali and the Balthi.

The Date of Ablabius

It is possible to deduce an approximate date for Ablabius because his reconstruction of Gothic history is in important respects anachronistic. Jordanes tells us that according to Ablabius the Goths settled in Scythia, near Lake Maeotis, were divided into two organized groups, already known as the Ostrogoths, which according to him means "eastern Goths," and the Visigoths, so called because they were "the Goths of the western country."⁴² In the third century and during the first half of the fourth the Goths did indeed fall into two groups; one settled north of the Black Sea and the other in the Eastern Balkans, roughly in what is now Romania. But that they were already known respectively as Ostrogoths and Visigoths is certainly anachronistic. For Ammianus, an extremely reliable historian, in his contemporary account of the impact of the

39 *Getica* 247–51. See Peter Heather, *Goths and Roman 332–489*, (Oxford 1991), 25–26, for a strong argument that Cassiodorus and Jordanes wrongly identified Vinitharius with Vithimeris the son of Ermanaric, and doing so moved to 375, and after, events and personalities that belonged to ca. 460.

40 *Getica* 251.

41 *Getica* 270.

42 *Getica* 82: "Those who held the Eastern region, and whose king was Ostrogotha, were called Ostrogoths, either from his name, or from the name of the place."

Huns on the Goths, confirms that the Goths did in fact fall into two groups, but he calls them Greutungi and Tervingi.

It is indeed likely that the Greutungi were already also known as Ostrogoths.⁴³ The name implies that they were settled east of some other Goths. Those other Goths were of course the Tervingi who were settled on the frontier of the empire. However the Tervingi were certainly not yet known as Visigoths (or Vesigoths). The Tervingi did indeed have a second name: the Vesi,⁴⁴ but Visigoths the lengthened form of the name only came into existence in the sixth century. Although the western Goths are usually described as Visigoths in modern histories, this name is not used by ancient writers earlier than Cassiodorus.⁴⁵ The name is a creation of the age of Theoderic, formed as a parallel to Ostrogoths. Jordanes tells us that that Visigothi, the lengthened form of Vesi, meant “the Goths from the western country.”⁴⁶ This is a reinterpretation of the name which would have been as appropriate before as after their migration to the west, for the Vesi always lived west of the Ostrogoths. However the fact Ablabius described them not just as Vesi but as Visigoths, using the later designation, shows that he was writing in the age of Theoderic.

The Contribution of Cassiodorus

Although the anachronistic backdating of the division into Ostrogoths and Visigoths seems to go back to Ablabius, the claim that when the Goths were dwelling north of the Black Sea, on the shore of the Sea of Azov, “in their third dwelling place,”⁴⁷ the Ostrogoths were already governed by Amali, and the

43 The name occurs in three texts, one of which (Claudian, *In Eutropium* 2.158) certainly, and two (*HA Claud.*, 6.2; *Zos. Hist. Nov.* 4.38.1) most probably go back to the 390s.

44 With Wolfram, *History*, 387 n. 58, the Tervingi and Vesi can be taken as identical. After the Tervingi had entered the empire, members of the *gens* were recruited into parallel *auxilia palatina* in each of the two of the eastern praesental armies, named respectively Teruingi and Visi (*Not. dig. or.* 5.61, 6.61). On the significance of the names of the Goths see the Appendix.

45 It is used by Procopius 3.2.5 ff; 8.5.5 ff. According to Hachmann, *Goten und Skandinavien*, Berlin 1970, 126, it occurs 51 times in the *Getica*.

46 *Getica* 82.

47 The phrase “their third dwelling place” must be an insertion of Cassiodorus. There is no reason to think that the Goths had ever left the area north of the Black Sea, but Cassiodorus (followed by Jordanes) had to invent a migration to get them to the region where the events narrated in the Scytho-Gothic excursus take place. They then had to be

Visigoths by Balthi originated with Cassiodorus.⁴⁸ As for the Balthi, we have no evidence that the family of the great Alaric had any history as a ruling family.⁴⁹ What we know of the biography of Alaric suggests that he was a self-made man, that he owed his supreme position first to a command of a contingent of Goths in the Roman army, and then to his leadership of this unit in a successful mutiny, or rather rebellion, followed by a sensational Italian campaign, which culminated in the sack of Rome itself. We are not even told the name of his father. None of the earlier Gothic leaders is said to have belonged to this family.⁵⁰ It is likely that Alaric was in fact the first of the Balthi to achieve ruling power, and thus the founder of the dynasty (descended from his daughter) that was to provide kings of the western Goths in Gaul.

As for the Amali, Heather has made a strong case that their pedigree in Jordanes' *Getica* is very unlikely to be authentic.⁵¹ Among the named Gothic leaders who confronted the Romans in the mid-third and early fourth centuries only one is found in the pedigree of the Amals. That is Ostrogotha, whose name may suggest that he has been invented to be the eponymous hero of what became the Ostrogothic *gens*.⁵² Heather concluded that the pedigree of the Amali is not based on folk memory, but has been constructed by artifi-

returned to the region where the Goths were actually known to have dwelt in historical times, which thus became their "third home."

- 48 *Getica* 42–43, stating that in their "third dwelling" (on the Lake of Azov) the Visigoths were ruled by the Balthi, and the Ostrogoths by the Amali, are part of a passage (*Getica* 39–46) introducing the Scytho-Gothic excursus of Cassiodorus.
- 49 Jordanes has no pedigree of the Balthi, and when he introduces Alaric into his historical narrative (*Getica* 146) he says nothing of any traditional royalty or chieftainship of the Balthi.
- 50 Cniva, Veduc, Thuruar, Ariaric, Aoric, Nidada, Ovida, Hilerith, Geberich. The last four are said to have been a linear succession of father to son. Mommsen concluded that they were all rulers of the Tervingi/Visigoths, and that therefore they must have been Balthi, but that is not stated anywhere in the text. Nor is it stated that Fritigern and Athanaric, the leaders of the Tervingi/Visigoths in the 370s, were descended from the earlier kings, or indeed related to Alaric. As for Geberich, if he really was the predecessor of Ermanaric (*Getica* 116) he was king of the Greutungi, but if this statement is wrong, he could have been a Tervingian (see n. 151 below), but not necessarily of the Balthi.
- 51 Peter Heather, "Cassiodorus and the Rise of the Amals, Genealogy and the Goths under Roman Domination," *JRS* 79 (1989), 102–28. The reference to Ansi demigods, legends, and Gapt (*Getica* 78–9) shows that that the new pedigree was grafted onto older traditions.
- 52 Cf. P. Heather, *Goths and Romans*, Oxford 1991, 22–23, 36–37. Ermanaric, the great Greutungian ruler of the mid-fourth century, is on the pedigree of the Amals, but Geberich, whom Ermanaric is said to have succeeded after a brief interval (*Get.* 116), is not. Achiulf, the father of Ermanaric on the pedigree, has no part whatsoever in the narrative of Jordanes, which he surely would have done if he had been a ruler of the Greutungi. In short, the narrative history of Jordanes does not confirm the testimony of Jordanes'

cially linking names that previously had had no connection with each other in order to give the family of Theoderic a long history, and so to glorify Theoderic himself. According to Heather the genuine part of the Amal pedigree does not go beyond Valamer, the uncle of Theoderic. He argues that neither the Amali nor the Balthi had been the royal dynasties with the long histories presented by Jordanes, who significantly describes the Amali as the superior of the two families.⁵³ Heather points out that this reconstruction of Gothic history corresponds to the situation of the late fifth and early sixth centuries, when Theoderic the Amal governed the Ostrogoths in Italy and descendants of a daughter of Alaric governed the Visigoths in Gaul.

Even if one does not accept every detail of Heather's deconstruction of the Amal pedigree, his argument that both the third century origin of the division into Ostrogoths and Visigoths, and the long established importance of their two respective royal dynasties, are anachronistic remains convincing. Some Germanic *gentes* did construct their identities around their dynasties. The dynasty of the Hasdingi was an essential element in Vandal identity, and the Merovingian dynasty embodied the unity of the Franks. But what we know of the history of Visigoths and Ostrogoths suggests that neither had a tradition of veneration for members of a particular family. Their history is a story of successful leaders.⁵⁴ An unsuccessful leader was quickly eliminated irrespective of who his father was. Alatheus and Saphrax, Odotheus, Radagaisus, and Theoderic Strabo son of Triarius all were leaders of large bodies of Ostrogoths, or at least of Goths who had not entered the empire together with the Tervingi in 375, yet none of them seems to have belonged to the Amali. In the fifth century the Ostrogoths were neither monolithic, nor was their leadership monopolized by a single family.

Heather was surely right to conclude that the narrative that traced this dichotomy back to the third century was constructed in the reign of Theoderic. This is likely on more general considerations. The writing of history was a feature of Greco-Roman culture. The Goths were an oral society.⁵⁵ But Theoderic certainly sought to make his Goths an integral part of the Roman world. This would require them to have a history to match the histories of the Romans and the Greeks. But although Heather attributes the construction of this earliest history of the Goths to Cassiodorus, it should be assigned to Ablabius.

version of the pedigree, and certainly does not support the claim that the kingship of the Greutungi goes back to the third century, if not earlier.

53 *Getica* 146.

54 E.A. Thompson, *The Goths in Spain* (Oxford, 1969), 19: "The principle of hereditary succession to the throne never took root among them."

55 See below.

The coexistence of Ostrogothic and Visigothic realms, one governed by an Amal, the other by one of the Balthei, was a topical fact in the decade before 507, when the two realms and dynasties were for a time united by the marriage of the daughter of Theoderic, king of the Ostrogoths, to Alaric II of the Visigoths. Perhaps Ablabius was given the commission on the occasion of the marriage of Theodegotha.

It is almost certain that the Amal pedigree, as reproduced by Jordanes, was compiled by Cassiodorus.⁵⁶ Indeed Cassiodorus practically tells us so in a letter to the Roman Senate that he composed on behalf of king Athalaric:

He (Cassiodorus) extended his labours even to the ancient cradle of our house, learning from his reading what the hoary memory of our ancestors scarcely preserved. From the lurking places in antiquity he led out the kings of the Goths long hidden in oblivion. He restored the Amals, along with the honour of their family, clearly proving me to be of royal stock to the seventeenth generation.⁵⁷

It would appear that the Gothic king himself did not know about these ancestors "long hidden in oblivion" before they were uncovered by Cassiodorus. The effect of the construction and insertion into the Gothic history of the Amal pedigree was to make the history of the Gothic people almost identical with the history of their royal Amal family.

It is significant that the pedigree as transmitted by Jordanes is a much-shortened version of Cassiodorus' original, for the pedigree is introduced with the information that it will describe the parentage, beginning, and end of each individual.⁵⁸ This statement can have come only from Cassiodorus, for the promised information is not provided by Jordanes. It has been deliberately cut out. Why? We can only conjecture. It is also the case that the pedigree as reproduced by Jordanes does not wholly agree with what Cassiodorus in *Variae* 9.25 writes about it. According to the letter, the kings Cassiodorus claims to have found from his reading were Amals. But Jordanes does not explicitly state that the early Amals, with the one exception of Ostrogotha, had been kings. Although he tells us that the victor of the Dacian war in the reign of Domitian had been the first of the Ansi, which perhaps was some sort of Gothic semi-god (*Getica* 78), he does not claim that he had been an Amal,

⁵⁶ See above in Heather, "Cassiodorus and the Rise of the Amals". *JRS* 70 (1989), 103–28.

⁵⁷ *Variae* 9.25.4.

⁵⁸ *Getica* 78: "quis quo parente genitus est, unde origo coepta, ubi finem fecit."

which of course a king of the Dacians could not have been. Is this covert criticism of the historicity of Cassiodorus' reconstruction?

We can be reasonably sure that the long account of the "Scythian-Goths" in Moesia, Scythia, and Dacia was not already part of the *Gothic History* of Ablabius, because Ablabius' narrative evidently had to be split in order to accommodate the account of the supposed Goths in Moesia, Scythia, and Dacia as a "digression."⁵⁹ He begins his narrative of the later history of the Goths and their relations with the Roman Empire by recalling that he had earlier cited Ablabius' account of the settlement of the Goths on the north of the Pontic Sea.⁶⁰ This implies that he was now returning to the story as told by Ablabius, which would therefore appear to have continued straight from the Gothic settlement on the Pontic Sea to their relations with the Roman Empire. It offered a much shorter Gothic history than that of Cassiodorus and Jordanes, one that began not long before the third century CE.⁶¹ The Scytho-Gothic digression must therefore be later than the narrative of Ablabius, and must have been composed either by Cassiodorus or by Jordanes himself. But Jordanes cannot have been the author, for Jordanes relates that the kingdom of the Goths was destroyed by Justinian's general Belisarius after it had lasted 2,030 years. He is unlikely to have made this calculation himself, because his history has very little numerical chronology. Gothic history could not have been made to add up to anything approaching 2,030 years without the inclusion of every one of the ancient histories of Scythians⁶² and Getae.⁶³ Presumably Jordanes found both his total number of years, and the events that occupy them, in the twelve books of the *Origins* of Cassiodorus.

Cassiodorus' *Variae* also include a letter in which king Athalaric praises Cassiodorus for having made the history of the Goths into a Roman history.⁶⁴ This does not mean that Cassiodorus turned the Goths into Romans. He clearly did not do that. What he did do was to present the Goths as a historic people,

59 *Getica* 82: "now let us return to the point where we made our digression . . . now Ablabius the historian relates", and he goes on to tell of king Ostorgotha who, we later learn lived in the mid-third century (98–100).

60 *Getica* 28: Ablabius mentioned as source for the settlement on the Pontic Sea. Ibid. 82: Jordanes recalls this reference to Ablabius.

61 *Getica* 39–81.

62 Herodotus *Hist.* 4.7 states that Targitaos, the first king of the Scythians, lived 1,000 years before Darius, the great king of Persia. If Cassiodorus started his chronology with Targitaos, that would give a duration of around 2,030 years for the kingdom of the Goths. Jordanes does not mention Targitaos.

63 On Getae, see below nn. 74–77.

64 *Variae* 9.25.4.

like the Romans. By incorporating all this material, he greatly increased the otherwise pitifully scanty evidence for the early history of the Goths. Although some of the stories he built into his history of the Goths are in fact entirely mythical, all or nearly all, had been assigned dates by Eusebius⁶⁵ or other chronographers, and could therefore easily be composed into a history.

It is likely that it also was Cassiodorus who inserted geographical and ethnographic excursuses into the history of the Goths. Such excursuses were a feature of classical historiography, above all late antique historiography.⁶⁶ At the court of Theoderic, topography and ethnography appear to have flourished; occasionally even books of the Bible were bound together with works of classical geography that could help the readers to understand the scriptural text.⁶⁷ Cassiodorus advised users of his monastery's library: "We recommend, not without reason, that some conception of geography should be touched upon by you as well, so that you might know clearly in what part of the world are located the places you read about in Holy Scripture."⁶⁸ The excursuses would help readers of Cassiodorus' *Origins* in the same way.

The effect, and no doubt the purpose of the incorporation of the stories about the Getae and the Scythians together with the geographical excursuses into the story of the Goths was to give them a proper classical history in no fewer than twelve books. Moreover this history was even longer than the history of the Romans, for it reached back before the Trojan war, and so also before Aeneas, the hero of the national epic of Rome.

How Seriously Did Cassiodorus Take His "Scytho-Gothic" Excursus as History?

One nevertheless may wonder whether Cassiodorus took his construction of Gothic prehistory altogether seriously. The inclusion of these stories in a history of the Goths was made possible by a literary convention of long standing.⁶⁹

65 Translated into Latin as Jerome's *Chronicle: Die Chronik des Hieronymus*, R. Helm, ed., *GCS* 47 (1956); *PL* 27.

66 Cf. the excursuses in Tacitus, Ammianus Marcellinus, Procopius, and Agathias.

67 F. Staab, "Ostrogothic Geographers at the Court of Theoderic the Great: a Study of Some of the Sources of the Cosmographer of Ravenna," *Viator* 7 (1976), 27–64. Mark Humphries, "A New Creative World: Classical Geographical Texts and Christian Contexts in Late Antiquity," in J.H.D. Scourfield, ed., *Texts and Culture in Late Antiquity: Inheritance, Authority and Change*, (Swansea, 2007), 33–67.

68 Cassiodorus, *Inst.* 1.25.1.

69 The section is divided into two by a geographic excursus describing the Near East.

The events that make up Cassiodorus' Scytho-Gothic prehistory are set mostly in Thrace, Dacia, and Scythia, that is in today's eastern Balkans and southeastern Ukraine, although those involving the Amazons are set in Asia Minor.⁷⁰ It was a convention of classical authors, from Herodotus onwards, to ignore the individual names and identities of peoples successively inhabiting these regions, and to refer to them indiscriminately and collectively as Scythians.⁷¹ Given that from at least the middle of the third century CE to the end of the fifth century a large number, perhaps a majority, of Goths lived in that region, they too could be described as Scythians, and were indeed regularly so described by literary authors, starting with Dexippus in his account of the Gothic invasions of the mid-third century, when the Goths clashed with the empire for the first time.⁷²

Getae was the name given to successive inhabitants of the Dobrudja, between the Haemus range and the mouth of the Danube, which was where the Goths were to operate in the third century.⁷³ In 376 when the Goths broke loose in the Balkans after they had been admitted into the empire by the emperor Valens, Ambrose, bishop of Milan, tried to calm the growing panic by claiming that the arrival from the north of the Goths was merely the fulfillment of the prophecy of Ezekiel about the coming of the menacing hosts of Gog. The Lord would destroy the Goths, as Ezekiel had foretold that the Lord would destroy Gog.⁷⁴ In the event, the Goths, far from being destroyed, proceeded to destroy the army of the emperor Valens, together with the emperor himself. At this point Jerome provided an alternative explanation of the Gothic menace: he drew attention to the similarity of the name of the Goths to that of the Getae, and insisted that this showed that the historic Getae were the ancestors

70 *Getica* 41–46, 56–57.

71 The practice of describing peoples living beyond the border of the empire, along the Black Sea, indiscriminately as Scythians, or in the case of the Goths also as Getae, did not become a literary convention because historians did not know that they were writing about a great variety of peoples, e.g., Oros. *Hist. adv. pag.* 7.34: "*Scythicas gentes . . . hoc est Alanos, Hunnos et Gothos.*" They followed this convention because they preferred classical to contemporary proper names, perhaps sometimes motivated also by an arrogant disregard of discrimination, just as western Europeans used to refer to "Orientals."

72 See below n. 127.

73 Dio Cass. 51.27.2. For a compact account of the history of this region and its inhabitants see I. v. Bredow, *New Pauly* 5 (Leiden/Boston, 2004), s.v. Getae, 842–44. Dacians are sometimes described as Getae, hence they too could be identified as Goths at the end of the Scytho-Gothic excursus 9 (*Getica* 76–78).

74 Jordanes, *Getica* 29, alludes to this identification, recalling that Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.6.1, described the followers of Magog as Scythians.

of the Goths. He thus lent the authority of his name to that identification, which he had not invented,⁷⁵ and which Cassiodorus was to find so useful, and which Jordanes accepted on the authority of Orosius.⁷⁶

Cassiodorus exploited the convention to the full. But did he really believe that it provided a basis for true history? It would seem not. For the convention was not observed, or at least not totally observed, by writers who were interested in these peoples for their own sake. The ethnographers whom historians like Jordanes used for their geographical and ethnographic excursions used the correct contemporary names of the various peoples living in the region they are describing. Ammianus' account of the entry of the Goths into the empire in 376 and of the subsequent events not only refers to the incomers as Goths, but is also careful to distinguish between the sub-groups of Tervingi and Greutungi. Jordanes himself sometimes refers to Goths as Getae,⁷⁷ but more often he uses their proper name of Goths. So writers of the late empire were well aware that Getae and Scythians were collective designations, covering a large number of different peoples, settled at different time in the eastern Balkans and southeastern Ukraine, and that it must have been obvious to them that true history could not be written on the assumption that every reference by classical writers to Scythians or Getae referred precisely to Goths.

Moreover, some of Cassiodorus' identifications surely are playful. Could he really have believed that the historical truth about the Amazons was that they had been Gothic women? His account of Gothic prehistory certainly includes some extremely unlikely culture heroes, most notably Dicineus, whom Jordanes first tells us (seemingly correctly) had been a contemporary of Sulla, although a little later he makes him a contemporary of the emperor Tiberius (*Getica* 68). This sage is supposed to have taught the Goths philosophy and, especially, ethics in order to restrain their barbarous customs:

By teaching them physics he made them live naturally under laws of their own, which they possess in written form to this day, and which they call *belagines*. He made them skilled in reasoning beyond all other races and

75 Claudian regularly call the Goths Getae. He is unlikely to have got this identification from Jerome. "Getae" had already been introduced into the Latin poetic vocabulary by Ovid in his *Tristia*. Their place in classical literature goes back to Herodotus, according to whom (*Hist.* 4.94) they were the most law-abiding of the Thracian peoples.

76 *Getica* 58 (curiously referring back to a passage that is not in our text). Orosius makes the identification in *Hist.adv.pag.* 1.16.68: "*Getae illi qui et nunc Gothi*."

77 E.g., *Getica* 120, 129, 132, 177, 309, 316, and of course in his title.

he gave them a thorough knowledge of astronomy. For a short time the Goths had leisure from warfare and could enjoy lessons in philosophy.⁷⁸

The *belagines* are evidently a genuinely Gothic, originally oral, set of laws. But this image of intellectual and philosophical Goths is of course quite different from that of a warrior people found elsewhere in Jordanes' history, and a world away from the characterization of Roman accounts of that people. But the portrayal of Dicineus does tally with the role that Cassiodorus, in a panegyric mode, perhaps even then with tongue in cheek, assigned to more recent and genuinely Gothic leaders: "Amalus was distinguished for his good fortune, Ostrogotha for his patience, Athala for his mercy, Vinitarius for justice, Unimundus for beauty, Thorismuth for chastity, Valamer for good faith, Teodimer for his sense of duty, your glorious father (Theoderic) for his wisdom."⁷⁹ The whole of Cassiodorus' reconstruction of Gothic history was after all intended as a panegyric of the Gothic people and their Amal dynasty.

Another indication that Cassiodorus did not consider his Scytho-Gothic extension of Gothic history historical is that his Amal pedigree does not extend that far back into history. The pedigree of seventeen generations takes us back only to the late first century, in fact to the reign of Domitian, where it stands in *Getica* 78, even though Jordanes later implies (*Getica* 313), that it lasted ca. 2,030 years.

Today it would not be considered proper for a would-be scholar to invent a history, to construct a supposedly historical pedigree, or to glorify a people and its ruler, although it would be for a journalist or a spin-doctor. But Cassiodorus employed playful invention of historical continuities to enhance the dignity of a contemporary institution even in official correspondence. One might also mention Cassiodorus' allegorical interpretations of the Circus Maximus at Rome and of much of the equipment used in chariot racing,⁸⁰ or his suggestion that the office of praetorian prefect was modeled on that of the biblical Joseph.⁸¹ This was wholly in the spirit of the age. John the Lydian traces the history of the office of the praetorian prefect, via that of the master of the

78 *Getica* 67–72. On the historical (Getic) Dicineus see Strabo 7.3.5 (398) & 7.3.11 (303). Cassiodorus also assigned to the Goths a philosopher-king in Zalmoxis (*Getica* 39), who seems to be based on the mysterious Salmoxis, who according to Herodotus (*Hist.* 4.94–96) taught the Getae the doctrine of immortality in the mid-sixth century CE or earlier.

79 *Variae* 11.1.19. Presumably Cassiodorus had anecdotes illustrating these qualities of the Gothic heroes in his *Origins*. Goffart, "Jordanes," 40, notes that Jordanes has not included any of them in his *Getica*.

80 *Variae* 3.51.

81 *Variae* 6.3.

horse of the dictators of the Roman Republic, to the tribune in charge of the 300-man-strong cavalry of Romulus.⁸² He takes the history of the office of prefect of the city back to the time of the decemvirs.⁸³ Similar half-serious links between present legislation and distant past are found in the prefaces to some of Justinian's *Novels*.⁸⁴ One might also compare the half-serious genre of urban history, the *patria*.⁸⁵

Jordanes' Own Contribution

When we look at the detail of Jordanes' text it is of course very difficult to distinguish Jordanes' own contributions. But bearing in mind that Cassiodorus' *Origins* were not available to Jordanes for consultation, and that Jordanes was writing in completely changed political circumstances, we must expect differences between the two versions to be considerable. By comparing a number of narratives in Jordanes' *Getica* with notices of the same events in the chronicle of Cassiodorus, Croke has shown that Jordanes' assessment of events sometimes differed significantly from what he is at all likely to have found in Cassiodorus. So although Cassiodorus' account of the Goths is totally laudatory, that of Jordanes is more distanced, and even includes comments that are critical.⁸⁶ More significantly, he has evidently omitted much of Cassiodorus' surely highly laudatory account of the reign of Theoderic.⁸⁷ Perhaps he was afraid that his portrait of Theoderic might be thought to reflect unfavorably on Justinian.

As for the factual information of the *Getica*, any attempt to identify Jordanes' contributions, whether additions or omissions, must necessarily be extremely speculative.⁸⁸ How good was Jordanes' memory? How long was the interval between his rereading of Cassiodorus' *History* and his decision to start on his

82 *De mag.* 1.6(14).

83 *De mag.* 1.9(34). The late Roman *capita* (soldier's expense allowance for his horse) traced back to an allowance for horses supposedly issued during the siege of Veii in 396 BCE.

84 Notably *Novels* 24–25 introducing the new office of praetor to govern respectively the provinces of Pisidia and Lycaonia.

85 G. Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire, Étude sur le recueil des patria* (Paris, 1984).

86 Cf. Cassiodorus, *Chron.* 1331, "Theodericus . . . Odovacrem molientem sibi insidias interemit" with Jordanes, *Romana* 349, "Theodericus Odoacrum in deditiones suscepit, deinde vero ac si suspectum Ravenna in palatio iugulans."

87 Noted by Goffart, "Jordanes," 65–68.

88 Hachmann, *Goten und Skandinavien*, Berlin 1970, 473–79, lists comments, interrupting the narrative, which clearly are Jordanes' own. These include the account of the lesser Goths,

shortened version? But there is one feature of Jordanes' *Getica* that makes it very unlikely that it is essentially no more than a summary of *Origins* of Cassiodorus. This is the fact that Jordanes' work includes numerous passages that are unmistakably derived from identifiable passages of earlier classical authors. Not a few of these authors are named, but some, including Rufinus and Ammianus, are not.⁸⁹ These extracts can be identified not only because the information they convey is close to that of their source, but also because they sometimes retain much of the source's vocabulary. This is not what one would expect to find in a text that had been shortened from twelve books to one, and moreover shortened without the original being available to the abbreviator for reference. One can think of a variety of possible explanations. Jordanes may not be telling the truth when he tells us that Cassiodorus' work had not been available to him. Alternatively, he might have copied these passages from some other historian who had assembled his history using a scissor-and-paste technique and so reproduced the actual wording of his sources. He might even have taken notes when he was given three days to refresh his memory of Cassiodorus work.

Malalas and John the Lydian, who were contemporaries of Jordanes, cite numerous ancient authors whom they almost certainly had not read at first hand. Ablabius and Cassiodorus may well have done the same. Did Jordanes? But then again Jordanes might have done his own research, and looked up the works at first hand. Jordanes certainly started the *Getica* with an outline knowledge of the relevant Roman history. He was already working on the *Romana*, which seems to have been largely compiled from Orosius' *Historia adversus paganos*, Eutropius, and Florus.⁹⁰ He surely also consulted these three works when he needed to supplement his memory of Cassiodorus' *Origins*. Some of the numerous passages in the *Getica* that could have derived some information from Orosius also retain some of Orosius' vocabulary.⁹¹ Cassiodorus' work finishes in 519, the *Getica* continues to 551. To finish his *Getica* Jordanes needed another source. Comparison of the texts makes it likely that he used

Vulfila's people, living near Nicopolis at the base of the Haemus range (*Getica* 267), as was also suggested by Andrew Poulter.

89 Conveniently listed and discussed in Latin by Mommsen, *MGH AA* 5.1.xxx–xliv, and mainly following Mommsen, but in English and with some criticism, in C.C. Mierow, *The Gothic History of Jordanes* (Princeton, 1915, repr. Cambridge, UK/New York, 1966), 29–37.

90 Florus: Mommsen, *MGH AA* 5.1.xxiii–xxv; Eutropius: *ibid.*, xxv–xxvi; Orosius: *ibid.*, xxvii and numerous footnotes to both *Romana* and *Getica*.

91 E.g., *Getica* 121 and Orosius, *Hist.adv.pag.* 3.3.10; *Getica* 4; Orosius, *Hist.adv.pag.* 1.21; *Getica* 68, Orosius, *Hist.adv.pag.* 3.2; *Getica* 63, Orosius, *Hist.adv.pag.* 2.9.

the *Chronicle* of Marcellinus Comes (and its continuator), which he also seems to have already used for his account of the later fifth century.⁹²

Jordanes is likely also to have used other sources, including works which have been lost. Many descriptions in the *Getica* include detail of a kind that could have been difficult to remember for any length of time, and that Jordanes is unlikely to have simply recalled from his reading of Cassiodorus' *Origins*. For instance, he does not name Ammianus, but parallels both in vocabulary and factual detail make it difficult to believe that he did not draw on the text of Ammianus' *History* for his account of Hermanaric, the great king of the Greutungi, and for the subsequent description of the society of the Huns, as well as for his account of the fateful admission of the Goths into the empire in 376.⁹³ But although he took over facts and even some vocabulary from Ammianus he modified the tendency of Ammianus' narrative. Moreover, if he used Ammianus, he used him selectively: for example, he has ignored Ammianus' account of the Gothic war of the emperor Valens,⁹⁴ perhaps because it involved violent conflict between Goths and Romans, something he tends to minimize⁹⁵ when he cannot ignore it.

Among the sources named by Jordanes is Priscus,⁹⁶ and there is no doubt that Priscus is behind Jordanes' disproportionately full accounts of the court of Attila and of Attila's invasion of Gaul. In their quantity of detail and in their style these passages stand out from the surrounding narrative. Although we can compare only one of these extracts with the corresponding fragment of Priscus' lost original, it is clear that all the passages from Priscus are written in a style that is obviously superior to and more "classical" than that of the surrounding narrative, as Mommsen pointed out.⁹⁷ But the explanation is not obvious. If we believe Jordanes that he is summarizing Cassiodorus from memory, one would not expect him to reproduce lengthy passages verbatim. But

92 L. Varady, "Jordanes Studies, Jordanes und das *Chronicon* des Marcellinus Comes—die Selbständigkeit des Jordanes," *Chiron* 6 (1976), 441–87.

93 See Heather, "Cassiodorus and the rise of the Amals," *JRS* 70, 1989, 11–16, on the way Jordanes has used both material and some vocabulary of Ammianus.

94 Ammianus 27.4.1; 5.1–10. In 5.6 he mistakenly makes Athanaric *iudex* of the Greutungi.

95 That is probably also the reason for his inadequate and faulty account of Alaric's invasion of Italy (*Getica* 146–63).

96 *Getica* 178, 183, 222, 254.

97 The fragments of Priscus are assembled in R.C. Blockley, ed., *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire*, vol. 2, *Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus, Text, Translation and Historiographical Notes* (Liverpool, 1983), 222–377, include large chunks of Jordanes. On Jordanes' use of Priscus see Mommsen, *MGH AA* 5.1.xxxiv–xxxvi; Mierow, *Gothic History of Jordanes*, 31–32.

if he did not have the text of Cassiodorus in front of him, how did he achieve the superior style? Was Jordanes able to produce a translation from Greek into Latin that was more elegant than his own original Latin compositions? Hardly! Was he able to look up a Latin translation of Priscus other than that of Cassiodorus? Had he learnt these chapters of Cassiodorus by heart? Perhaps the most likely answer is that he had taken notes during the three days that he was able to study the text of Cassiodorus.

Another example of Jordanes' consulting a source for a particular purpose is his account of the astonishing rise from private soldier to emperor of the third-century emperor Maximinus, Jordanes believed that the father of this man had been a Goth and that his career showed that Goths had been able to reach the very highest stations in the empire.⁹⁸ In telling this story Jordanes repeats almost verbatim a section of the *Life of Maximinus* in the *Historia Augusta*,⁹⁹ although he tells us that he found this story in the *History of Symmachus*.¹⁰⁰ Presumably Symmachus had copied the story from the *Life of Maximinus*, and Jordanes copied it from Symmachus. He surely did not quote so accurately from memory. In short, one can risk the generalization that many of the episodes and descriptions in the *Getica* bearing a resemblance to a passage from a known work too close to be accidental seem to have been extracted from their original not so much to fill a gap in the continuity of Jordanes' narrative as to make some particular additional point.

It would also seem that much factual detail, particularly passages containing numerous proper names, are more likely to have been looked up than recalled from memory. Such passages are particularly abundant in the topographical and ethnographical excursuses. Jordanes has references to Ptolemy, Pompeius Trogus, Pomponius Mela,¹⁰¹ and Strabo, and comparison of the texts shows that Jordanes has indeed used these authors, and that he has used them even in some places where he has not mentioned them. Mommsen thought that in addition Jordanes also used a map;¹⁰² alternatively he might have used an epitome derived from a map, such as the books of Julius Honorius.¹⁰³ One might hazard the theory that Jordanes remembered in general terms what the excursuses of Cassiodorus were about, but as he had forgotten much of the

98 *Getica*, 83–89.

99 *HA Vita Maximini* 1–4.

100 W. Ensslin, *Des Symmachus Historia Romana als Quelle des Jordanes*, Sitzb. Baier. Akad. Phil. Hist. Kl. 1948 (Munich, 1949).

101 R. Batty, "Mela's Phoenician Geography," *JRS* 90 (2000), 70–94.

102 Mommsen, *MGH AA* 5.1.xxxi–xxxv.

103 J.W. Kubitschek, "Julius Honorius," *RE* 10 (1917), 614–28.

detail, above all the proper names that are essential both for geography and ethnography, he proceeded to look them up. This assumes that Jordanes had reference books at his disposal, a reasonable assumption if he was writing at Constantinople with its libraries.

Jordanes' Conclusion: A Christian Perspective on Goths, Empire, and the Human Condition

Cassiodorus gave the Goths a Roman history and made their history identical with the history of the Amals, with the reign of Theoderic as its climax. When Jordanes wrote his *Getica*, Justinian's armies had overthrown the Ostrogothic kingdom. So the tendency of the history had to be adjusted. In the last chapter of the *Getica* Jordanes duly compliments his emperor, the conqueror of the Goths: "The glorious [Gothic] race yielded to a more glorious prince, and surrendered to a more glorious leader. . . . I have not spoken so much in praise of the Goths as to the glory of him who conquered them."¹⁰⁴ Mainly on the evidence of this chapter, it has been claimed that Jordanes heartily endorsed the annihilation of the Ostrogothic kingdom, and that he wrote from a Roman perspective.¹⁰⁵ Thus Heather believes that the *Getica*, especially when combined with the *Romana*, champions outright imperial victory over the Goths.¹⁰⁶ But this interpretation is too simple. Yes, Jordanes glorifies Justinian the victor over the Goths. He shows admiration for the generalship of Belisarius. He suggests that the murder of Theoderic's daughter Amalasuintha, whom he describes as Justinian's ward, justified Justinian's campaign of reconquest. Writing at Constantinople¹⁰⁷ under Justinian, Jordanes was practically bound to end his work on that note.

But Jordanes lived in two worlds. His history is based on the *Gothic History* of Cassiodorus and still conveys the vision of what, with slight anachronism, one might call an ancient Gothic nation, a vision that Cassiodorus had created at the request of Theoderic. Yet, by comparing Jordanes' treatment of episodes also recorded in Cassiodorus' chronicle, Croke has shown that Jordanes is less one-sided than Cassiodorus in his assessment of Gothic behavior.¹⁰⁸ Moreover,

¹⁰⁴ *Getica* 315–16.

¹⁰⁵ Michael Kulikowski, *Rome's Gothic Wars, from the Third Century to Alaric* (Cambridge, 2007), 10.

¹⁰⁶ Heather, Matthews, *Goths*, 51.

¹⁰⁷ *Getica* 38: "our city" is surely Constantinople.

¹⁰⁸ Brian Croke, "Cassiodorus and the *Getica* of Jordanes," *CPh* 82.2 (1987), 117–34.

because he wrote almost twenty years later than Cassiodorus, the last chapters of his history are surely independent of Cassiodorus, and it is there that he reveals that he is not only a Goth¹⁰⁹ but also a Roman. The later 540s, the years when he wrote the *Getica*, were difficult years for the empire. There was a terrible outbreak of plague. Wars in Africa and Italy were going badly. Sclavenes and Antes were raiding all over the Balkan provinces, even into the neighborhood of Constantinople. Jordanes' passing references to these events show that they seriously worried him. He thought that they were the fault of Roman commanders.¹¹⁰ He implies that the Romans must do better. Jordanes has a double identity. He was an imperial patriot but at the same time he identified with his Gothic ancestors and took pride in their past. A dual allegiance of this kind was surely felt by many federate officers in the service of the empire.

But his final declaration of loyalty to empire and emperor does not cancel out the many passages in praise of his own Gothic people, which recur from the beginning to the end of his work. For it certainly is a theme running through the work that the Goths are a nation like the Romans, and have a history like that of the Romans, and indeed one that is even longer. He does not pretend that the Goths were as culturally advanced as the Romans. This was because they were essentially a warrior people, but as warriors they were the Romans' equals, nay, even superiors.¹¹¹ This made them invaluable allies. Jordanes even claims that the Romans found it difficult to fight wars without their help.¹¹² It was unfortunate that Goths and Romans had often been at war, but this was more often fault of the Romans rather than that of the Goths.¹¹³ Jordanes has told a tale of how a famous kingdom and most valiant race was overcome after almost 2,030 years (*Getica* 313). The theme is a tragic one.¹¹⁴

But even his professed faith in Rome and his glorification of Justinian, the conqueror of the Goths, cannot be taken totally at face value. In 551/2, just as Jordanes was completing his *Getica*, most of Italy was once again in Gothic

109 See above n. 3.

110 *Getica* 120: Veneti, Antes, Sclavenes rage far and wide "through our neglect." *Romana* 376–86 surveys mainly disasters.

111 Caesar failed to conquer them though he tried several times (*Getica* 68); difficult for Romans to defeat their enemies without help of Goths (*Getica* 111).

112 They are said to have enabled Constantine to build Constantinople by supplying 40,000 men to fight his wars (*Getica* 112.)

113 E.g., Goths provoked to war by avarice of Domitian (76); Philip withholds tribute due to Goths (89).

114 The subject matter if not the language surely has some of the pathos of Virgil's "fuimus Troes, fuit Ilium et ingens gloria Teucrorum" (*Aen.* 315–16), or even closer, "urbs antiqua ruit multos dominata per annos" (*ibid.* 364).

hands. Totila, the new Gothic leader, not an Amal, had come close to reversing the Roman victory and was now in control of an almost depopulated Rome and most of Italy. It is true that an army was being prepared to overthrow Totila, but its eventual success was far from guaranteed. Jordanes certainly does not express any desire for, or even expectation of, the success of this imminent Italian campaign. In fact he does not mention it at all. The narrative of the *Getica* ends with the birth of a posthumous son to Germanus, nephew of Justinian and Matesuintha, an Amal princess. Jordanes tells us that unification of the family of the Anicii with the stock of the Amali gives hopeful promise, "under the Lord's favor, to each family."¹¹⁵ Any such prospects, however, were very faint. Germanus was dead, and Jordanes must have been aware of a considerable likelihood that a one-year-old child would die in infancy. Jordanes pointedly says nothing about the political context of this marriage and this birth in the *Getica*, although he does in the *Romana*, adding that the death of Germanus actually encouraged Totila.¹¹⁶ It is surely significant that Jordanes does not express any expectation that the birth of the younger Germanus will benefit either of the two peoples. Indeed, there is very little indication in the *Getica* that Jordanes believed that the Gothic people had any future, but he does not express any great expectations for the Romans either.

Croke and others have argued that Jordanes was looking forward to the success of this campaign, and that if he has any message it is support of policy of unrestrained aggression. But this is pure conjecture, because Jordanes has in fact avoided very carefully any comments on the contemporary, or likely future position of the Goths in Italy, or indeed of the future of the empire. Significantly he ends his account of the Visigoths in Gaul by pointing out that their downfall was paralleled by the downfall of the western empire: as the Visigothic kingdom had been both established and ended under a king named Alaric, so the empire in the west had been both begun and ended under an emperor called Augustus.¹¹⁷

115 "Utriusque generi," significantly not *genti*. Pace Goffart, "Jordanes," 432, this sentence gives extremely weak support to the thesis that Jordanes is an *engagé* historian concerned to reconcile Romans and Goths in reconquered Italy with the fusion of their races.

116 *Romana* 382–85: "Germanus patricius dum exire disponit cum exercitu Mathesuentham . . . in matrimoniam sumptam . . . extremum halitum fudit. Qua felicitate sibi Totilla comperta totam pene . . . devastat Italiam."

117 *Getica* 245, "huic successit proprius filius Alarichus, qui nonus in numero ab illo Alarico magno regnum adeptus est Vesegotharum. nam pari tenore, ut de Augustis superius diximus, et in Alaricis provenisse cognoscitur, et in eos saepe regna deficiunt, a quorum nominibus inchoarunt." The last emperor to rule in Rome like the first (king) was called "Romulus".

Jordanes' views on the future of the empire seem to have been dominated by contemporary disasters, and essentially pessimistic. At the end of his *Romana*, Jordanes reminds his reader that what he has been reading is a survey of vicissitudes suffered by the Roman state, even though he has omitted to mention the daily assaults of Bulgars, Antes, and Sclavenes who were raiding even into the neighborhood of Constantinople. If one wants to read about those disasters as well, one must look into the "annals of the consuls" (that is, contemporary chronicles). There one will learn that Roman history of the present is fit to be written as a tragedy, and the benefit of one's historical reading will be that one will be made aware how the Roman state arose, how it was expanded, how it brought all lands into subjection, and how it lost them again, owing to the ignorance of its officials.¹¹⁸ The mood of this summing up of Roman history is not very different from Jordanes' overall view of the history of the Goths.

In fact, both histories might be said to proclaim, "O vanity of vanities, all is vanity."¹¹⁹ Jordanes could not have expressed this mood more clearly than he did in the letter that serves as a joint introduction to his two works. There, Jordanes reminds one Vigilius that he has been asked to write a history in order to find out about the distress and suffering (*aerumnas*) of the present world, and how they began.¹²⁰ Presumably, Jordanes thinks that his *Romana* has answered this request. Jordanes also sends Vigilius a copy of the *Getica*, hoping that when Vigilius has read about the disasters of various peoples, he will wish to be free of mental distress (*aerumna*) and turn his mind to God.¹²¹ In the course of the *Romana*, Jordanes tells us that he thinks that in the succession of empires prophesied by Daniel, the Roman Empire is the last empire before the end of the world.¹²² Jordanes ends the letter introducing both his works by quoting from the first epistle of John the Apostle: "Dear Friends, do not set your

118 *Romana* 388: "*repperietque dignam nostril temporis rempublicam tragydiae. Scietque unde orta, quomodo aucta, qualiterve sibi totas terras subdiderit, et quomod iterum eas ab ignaris rectoribus amiserit.*" A distant echo of Livy 1 *praef.* 9.

119 More fully developed by J.J. O'Donnell, "The Aims of Jordanes," *Historia* 31 (1982), 223–40.

120 *Romana* 2: "*vis enim praesentis mundi erumna cognoscere, aut quando coepit, vel quid ad nos usque perpeusus est, edoceri.*"

121 *Romana* 4: "*quatinus diversarum gentium calamitate conperta, ab omni erumna liberum te fieri cupias et ad deum convertas, qui est vera libertas*" (Mommsen's text). This view of history resembles that of Orosius (and Augustine), and was surely influenced by reading Orosius; cf. the preface and the epilogue of Orosius' work (*PL* 31.663–68 and 1174).

122 *Romana* 84: "*regnum eorum [of Antony and Cleopatra] in Romano imperio devenit, ubi et usque actenus et usque in finem mundi, secundum Danielis prophetia, regni debetur successio.*"

hearts on the world or on anything that is in it. For the world passes away with all its attractions, but he who does God's will shall remain for ever."¹²³

Gothic Identity: The Unity of the Gothic People Remains a Problem

It has been argued here that Ablabius and his successors, when they constructed a history of the Goths, used songs that originated before the Goths had entered the empire, which were in fact part of a Goths' "core culture." The existence of such a core culture should not be surprising, even if it has been doubted by some contemporary historians. There is sufficient evidence that by that time the Goths were already a people, a *gens*. There is no doubt that many of those who raided the empire in the mid-third century were already known as Goths. The identification is confused by the fact that Greek historians still called the raiders collectively Scythians.¹²⁴ But although it would seem that operations were undertaken by combinations of different peoples,¹²⁵ Goths were prominent among the invaders, if not predominant.¹²⁶

By the mid-third century CE, the Goths were recognizable as a distinct people. They spoke a Germanic language¹²⁷ different from the Thracian language of the earlier residents of the Black Sea region.¹²⁸ They also had laws, *belagines*.¹²⁹ These were of course unwritten and customary, transmitted orally from generation to generation. None of the *belagines* have been preserved. The Gothic laws that have come down to us, the fragmentary Code of Euric

123 1 John 2:15 ff.

124 E.g., Zos. *Hist.Nov.*1.23.1, but Dexippus identifies Goths: *FGrH* frg. 22: "Scythians, so-called Goths, crossing the Danube." On Dexippus, F. Millar, "Dexippus and the Third-Century Invasions," *JRS* 59 (1969), 12–29.

125 Zos. *Hist.Nov.*1.31: Borani, Carpi, Urugundi as well as Goths; *ibid.* 42: Peuci and Heruls and Goths.

126 Zos. *Hist.Nov.*1.31, 42; Canonical Letter of Gregory Thaumaturgus 3: Goths and Boranoi (i.e., northern peoples?), Philostorg. *HE* 2.5. The emperor Claudius II, who ended the presence of the invaders in the eastern Balkan provinces, took the title *Gothicus*.

127 D.H. Green, "Linguistic Evidence for the Early Migration of the Goths," in Peter Heather, ed., *The Visigoths from the Migration Period to the Seventh Century* (Woodbridge, 1999), 11–32; discussion of problems of Scandinavian origin: *ibid.*, 32–33. On the Gothic Bible and its language: P. Heather and J. Matthews, *Goths in the Fourth Century*, Liverpool 1991, 151–53, 175–97.

128 Peter A. Dimitrov, *Thracian Languages and Greek and Thracian Epigraphy*, (Newcastle, 2009).

129 *Getica* 69.

and the Codes of the Visigothic kings of Hispania, reflect the conditions of the Goths at the time of their definite settlement in the empire, and were heavily influenced by Roman law. Nevertheless these Codes do retain some traces of Germanic custom.¹³⁰

The Gothic bands that clashed with Romans from the mid-third century evidently shared cultural traits that constituted their Gothicity. But this does not mean that they were united politically, that they were anything like a state in the modern sense. Although Jordanes' narrative gives the impression that the Gothic *gens* had always been essentially a single united people, this impression is misleading. Indeed the precise nature of Gothic identity, and that of other Germanic *gentes*, is something of a mystery.¹³¹ None of major Germanic *gentes* was monolithic, and all seem to have been composed of independent sub-groups, under their own rulers, that might from time to time unite under a common leader for a joint military enterprise. The best-documented example is the Alamannic sub-groups that came together into the confederation that Julian defeated at the battle of Strasburg.¹³² The Franks likewise were not monolithic, but a union of Salii, Chamavi, Bructeri, Ampsivarii, and others. The *gens* of the Franks seems to have come into existence through some form of confederation of peoples mentioned by earlier historians as living on the lower Rhine under the early empire.¹³³ The Vandals were made up of Silings and Hasdings. In no case can we observe the origin of the sense of kinship and solidarity of a major *gens*. The identities of the Vandals and Goths were almost certainly older than those of Alamanni and Franks. But in every case they were formed before these peoples entered the empire, and influenced the way they

130 Isidore of Seville, *History of the Goths*, 35; P.D. King, *Law and Society in the Visigothic Kingdom* (Cambridge 1972), 222–63.; H. Nehlsen, *Sklavenrecht zwischen Antike und Mittelalter*, 153–250. The difficulty of isolating specifically Visigothic, or even generally Germanic, elements in the laws of the Visigoths see G. Ausenda, “Kinship and Marriage Among the Visigoths,” and I. Velázquez, “Jural Relations as an Indication of Syncretism from the Law of Inheritance to the *dum illicita* of Chindaswinth,” in Peter Heather, ed., *The Visigoths from the Migration Period to the Seventh Century* (Woodbridge, 1999), respectively 129–69 and 225–59.

131 W. Liebeschuetz, “The Debate about the Ethnogenesis of the Germanic Tribes,” in Hagit Amirav, Bas ter Haar Romeny, eds., *From Rome to Constantinople: Studies in Honour of Averil Cameron* (Leuven/Paris/Dudley, MA, 2007), 341–56.

132 This was how most of the Germanic *gentes* seem to have been constituted. See J.F. Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome* (Oxford 2007), 117–26 on the subgroups, *Teilstämme*, that made up or were to coalesce into the Alamanni.

133 Drinkwater, *Alamanni*, 106–7; on the decisive role of Childeric and above all Clovis in transforming the Franks into a major military power, *ibid.*, 352–55.

operated inside it. But once they were inside, the sub-groups and other subdivisions became meaningless, and so Jordanes, probably following Cassiodorus or even Ablabius, could minimize their importance. Thus, the names of the sub-groups of the Goths, the Greutungi, Tervingi, and even the Visi, do not occur in Jordanes' *Getica*.¹³⁴

As far as we can tell, the Goths were rarely if ever—probably not even under king Ermanaric—united under a single regime. Normally, the Gothic *gens* was divided into smaller groups, each with its own name and chieftain, and making its own political decisions. The Goths who raided Asia Minor in the mid-third century seem to have been war bands under independent leaders.¹³⁵ It is likely enough that some of the “kings” mentioned by Jordanes as interacting with the empire in peace or war during those troubled years were also leaders of war bands.¹³⁶ Ammianus' account of the events that led to the fatal admission of a large body of Goths into the empire in 376 shows that he was in no doubt that all the people concerned were Goths, but at the same time his narrative also shows that this *gens* was made up of independent subdivisions. The Greutungi under their king (*rex*) Ermanaric lived in eastern Ukraine, in what was the first and the third home of the Goths according to Jordanes. The Tervingi were further west, above all in Dacia (today's Romania), on the border of the empire. Tervingi were ruled by the *iudex* Athanaric, who led them in a war against the emperor Valens.¹³⁷

When, shortly after he had made peace with the Romans,¹³⁸ Athanaric was defeated by the Huns, his people split. One part, probably the greater part, deserted Athanaric and put themselves under the leadership of Alavivus and Fritigern. It was this group which was admitted into the empire by Valens, and in 378 won the great victory over Valens and the eastern Roman army at Adrianople. The remaining Tervingi, still under Athanaric, who had not entered the empire, withdrew to Caucalanda. Meanwhile, the Greutungi

134 But they were not totally forgotten. The Norse saga of *King Heidrek the Wise* includes an account of a battle between Goths and Huns fought beside the Danube in which a hero called Gyzur Grtyngalidi takes part, whose name probably means Gyzur of the Greutungil, while the Tervingi seem to be commemorated in *Tyrfinn*, the name of a formidable sword. See *The Saga of King Heidrek*, C. Tolkien (ed.), London: Nelson 1960, p. xxiv.

135 *Getica* 107: While Gallienus was given over to luxurious living... Respa, Veduc, and Thruruar, leaders of the Goths, took ship and sailed across the Hellespont to Asia.

136 Perhaps Cniva (*Getica* 101), Ariaric, Aoric (ibid. 112); also the heroes Eterpamara, Hanala, Vidigoia, said to have been commemorated in song (43).

137 Tervingi may mean “dwellers in the wooded regions,” and Greutungi “dwellers in the steppes,” so C. Tolkien in *Saga of King Heidrek*, London: Nelson 1960, xxiv n. 2.

138 Ammianus 31.5.7–8.

were ruled by the young king Vitericus, a grandson of Ermanaric, whereas the actual leadership was in the hands of two experienced military leaders (*duces*), Saphrax and Alatheus.¹³⁹ When they too asked to be admitted into the empire, they were refused. Some time later a large body of Greutungi seized an opportunity to cross the Danube and enter the empire without permission. They fought alongside the Tervingi under Fritigern in the battle of Adrianople in 378. They did however remain an independent group, for led by Alatheus and Saphrax they made peace with the emperor Gratian and were given land in Pannonia in 381.¹⁴⁰ The Thervingi received their treaty and land in Moesia from the emperor Theodosius in the following year. In 386 a second group of Greutungi tried to cross the Danube into the empire. They were unsuccessful, being defeated by the general Promotus. The survivors were settled in Phrygia. A large numbers of Goths still remained outside the empire, for in 406 a large Gothic band under Radagaisus invaded the empire, only to be defeated and broken up by Stilicho.¹⁴¹

Yet, even now very large numbers of Goths remained outside the empire, on the far side of the Danube. These Goths, or at least some of these Goths, also eventually entered the empire as federates, but only in the mid-fifth century, after the breakup of the empire of the Huns. These later entrants for some years operated as two rival groups, respectively under Theoderic son of Strabo and Theoderic son of Valamer, only to be eventually united under the latter, who then proceeded to lead them into Italy and to establish the kingdom of the Ostrogoths. There also were smaller groups under leaders of their own. For instance, around 400 CE we hear of Goths in the Crimea,¹⁴² presumably a remnant of the old Gothic settlement around Lake Maeotis. Within the empire, a Gothic group under Sueridus and Colias, which had long been settled near Adrianople, joined Fritigern's Tervingi in 376. Another such group was Ulfila's Goths settled in the province of Moesia in the neighborhood of Nicopolis.¹⁴³

139 Ammianus 31.3.3.

140 *Getica* 141; Zos. *Hist. Nov.* 4.34 (a confused account); Heather has argued that this evidence must be rejected, and that there was no separate peace and settlement in 381. See Heather, *Goths and Romans*, Oxford 1991, 340–41.

141 Isidore of Seville still believed in the myth of a united kingdom of the Goths, so he can write that in 399, "though the Goths had violently divided their kingdom into two parts, split between Alaric and Radagaisus, they nevertheless came to an agreement regarding the destruction of the Romans" (*Historia de regibus Gothorum*, 13, in K.B. Wolf, *Conquerors and Chroniclers of early Medieval Spain*, Liverpool 1990, 88).

142 Chrysostom *Epist.* 14.

143 *Getica* 267.

It would appear that whenever the Goths figure in history, they appear to operate as a number of sub-groups, which might, or might not, grow by a process of ethnogenesis into what amounted to practically independent *gentes*. So Alaric's Goths¹⁴⁴ became the Visigoths in Gaul and Hispania, and the united group under Theoderic became the Ostrogoths in Italy. The members of these various groups do, however, appear to have shared some kind of sense of kinship and common identity. But what the basis of this sense of kinship and how did it arise? We have no evidence that the people of the Goths came into existence by the amalgamation of older sub-groups, or that that the subdivisions of the Goths, the Tervingi/Vesi and the Greutungi/Ostrogothi, unlike those of the Franks, had ever been anything other than subdivisions. When these peoples entered history in the mid-third century, they were already Goths. If we look for evidence out how they became Goths we only have the traditions of the Goths themselves.

It has been thought that the archaeology of the Vistula area and of Ukraine, of respectively the Masowian and the Sîntana de Mureş-Ĉernjachov cultures, could be used to check, and even to supplement the legends of migration,¹⁴⁵ but archaeologists today doubt whether archaeology can provide evidence bearing on ethnicity.¹⁴⁶ So the circumstances that resulted in the ethnogenesis of the Goths, as well their chronology, remain shrouded in mystery.¹⁴⁷

Appendix

We know four names attached to subdivisions of the Goths: Greutungi, Ostrogoths, Tervingi, Vesi.¹⁴⁸ The first two are mentioned together and form a

144 "The western Goths were formerly known in the fifth century in the East as 'Alaric's Goths.'" (Priscus frg. 59, in Blockley, *Fragmentary Classicising Historians*, vol. 2, 370).

145 E.g., Hachmann, *Goten und Skandinavien*, Berlin 1970, esp. 251–79, 458–59, 464–65, on Masowian culture; P. Heather & J. Matthews, *The Goths in the Fourth Century*, 51–101, on Sîntana de Mureş-Ĉernjachov culture.

146 Hachmann, *Goten und Skandinavien*, already discusses the problem; more recently: Andrew Poulter, "Invisible Goths Within and Beyond the Roman Empire," in John Drinkwater, Benet Salway, eds., *Wolf Liebeschuetz Reflected* (London, 2007), 169–87.

147 The Goths are not unique in this. We can only make conjectures about the origin of the shared sense of identity of the Greeks, and even of Bede's *gens Anglorum*.

148 All are in the list of "Scythians" in *HA Claudius* 6.3: Peucini, Geutungi, Austrogothi, Tervingi, Vesi, Gepedes. The eastern pair alone: Claudian, *In Eutropium* 11.392, *Ostrogothis colitur mixtisq[ue] Geutungis Phrix ager*. The western pair only: *Not. dig. or.* 5.20.61: Visi; *ibid.* 6.61: Tervingi. The earliest reference to any of these names is in *PL* XI.iii.17.1 of 291 CE:

pair, as do the second two. It could be argued that the members of each pair were distinct, if perhaps closely related units, but it is assumed here that each of the paired names is an alternative designation, that the Ostrogoths, that is the eastern Goths, are identical with the Greutungi, “the men of the steppe,” and that the Vesi, “the noble ones,” is another name for the Tervingi, “the men of the forest.” This is fairly clear in the case of the Tervingi. Ammianus tells us that it was the Tervingi who were admitted into the empire in 376 with fateful consequences.¹⁴⁹ The body of Goths, who roamed through Italy, and settled and established a kingdom in Gaul and later in Spain, clearly had its origins in the Tervingi who crossed the Danube in 376, and were settled in 382, even if they certainly had absorbed a lot of others on the way.¹⁵⁰ Yet in 450, Sidonius Apollinaris could still describe them as Vesi in two panegyrics,¹⁵¹ even though in most contexts they are described simply as Goths, and in the east they were for a time known simply as Alaric’s Goths.¹⁵² As for the Greutungi, Ammianus tells us that they had ruled a great territory in what is now southern Russia under their king Hermanaric. Eventually they too moved into the Balkans, the empire, and eventually into Italy. However they are now no longer described as Greutungi. The name had become meaningless when they no longer lived on the steppe. For Greek authors they are simply Goths (or Scythians or Getae), but Latin authors, notably Sidonius Apollinaris, Cassiodorus, and Jordanes, distinguish the Goths that had remained in the Balkans, and who established a kingdom in Italy, as Ostrogoths. That name survived presumably because at the end of so much movement they still lived east of the Vesi/Visigoths.¹⁵³

All four names appear to be Germanic. Three of them are topographical. They distinguish the Goths living in the east from those in the west, those living on the steppe of southern Russia from those living in the woods of the

“*Tervingi alia pars Gothorum*.” The reference may be to the war against the Vandals led by king Geberich (*Getica* 112), though it would have been thirty or more years earlier than the reference in the *Getica*.

149 Ammianus 31.5.1.

150 Claudian, *De consulate Stilichonis* 5.94; “*quis enim Visos in plaustra feroces reppulit*.”

151 *Carm.* 7.399 of 456 CE: *Vesorum procures* are the counsellors of the king of the Gallic Goths. In *Carm.* 5.476 of 458 CE the Vesi are the Goths in Gaul and the Ostrogothi the Goths in the Balkans. In *Carm.* 2.376 and *Epist.* 7.9.5 the Ostrogoths are the Goths in the Balkans.

152 Priscus, fr.59, in Blockley, *Fragmentary Classicising Historians*, vol. 2, 370.

153 According to J. Svernung, *Jordanes und Scandia*, Stockholm 1967, Jordanes uses “*Gothi*” 162 times. According to Hachmann, *Goten und Skandinavien*, Berlin 1970, 122–26, “*Ostrogothi*” is used 12, mostly, if not always, when distinction from Visigoths needs to be shown, or at least is implied.

Balkans. Only the noble Goths, the Vesi, have a name that describes a particular group, and one that they could easily have chosen themselves. One might suggest that the other three names, too, originated among the Vesi, and that some Vesi in diplomatic or commercial contact with Romans invented these names to explain to the Romans about the different kinds of Goths.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Zosimus (based on Eunapius writing some time in the fifth century), 4.38.1: "There appeared above the Danube a nation of Scythians, unknown to the people dwelling there, but by barbarians called Grothungi." The barbarians who gave that information may well have been the Tervingi/Vesi, as Wolfram concluded: *History of the Goths*, 429 n. 110. If the incident was the same as that in Zosimus IV.35.1, the date was 386.

Why did Jordanes Write the *Getica*?*,¹

*Getica and Romana*²

Jordanes tells us that he wrote the *Getica*³ because a friend asked him to produce a shortened version of the *Gothic History* of Cassiodorus.⁴ We can believe him, but with one qualification—that this is not the whole story. After all, Jordanes was already profoundly interested in history: he was already at work writing a compendium of Roman History, which he had to interrupt to write the history of the Goths. His Roman History has a lengthy introduction which links the world of Greece and Rome with the events of the Bible, with the dating provided by Jerome's *Chronicle*. Jordanes therefore wrote secular history, but he located his secular history in a Christian framework. His historiography was up to date, like that of the nearly contemporary Chronicle of Malalas.⁵ One might also note that while the *Getica* is composed in the form of a narrative there is little attempt to produce a continuous story. It has some of the discontinuity of a chronicle, though it is not composed annalistically, and indeed very little concerned with chronology.

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- 1 I want to thank Geoffrey Greatrex for helpful suggestions and corrections. He is not responsible for remaining errors.
- 2 Jordanes, *Histoire de Rome de Romulus à Justinien 753 av. J.-C. à 552 apr. J.-C.*, suivie de *L'Histoire des Goths*, trad. H.A. Savagner & R. Fougères, Clermont Ferrand, 2002.
- 3 New text: F. Giunta and A. Grillone, *Jordanes, De origine actibusque Getarum*, Rome 1991. See also O. Devillers, *Histoire des Goths*, introd., transl., notes, Paris, 2005.
- 4 *Getica* 1: *ut nostris verbis duodecem volumina Senatoris de origine actusque Getharum ab olim et usque nunc per generationes regesque coartem*. On the identification of Getae and Gothi, see now C. Garcia, *Godos y Getas en la historiografía de la tardoantigüedad*, in *Studia Historica: Historia Antigua*, 22, 2004, pp. 179–296; also my *Making a Gothic History*, in *Journal of Late Antiquity*, 4.2, 2011 (in this volume 101–134).
- 5 E. Jeffreys, *Malalas' world view*, in E. Jeffreys, B. Croke, R. Scott (dir.), *Studies in John Malalas*, Sydney, 1990, pp. 55–66.

The *Getica* and the *Romana* are parallel histories. Each is self-contained. There is very little overlap, and a letter to a certain Vigilius serves as an introduction to both treatises.⁶ They are not, however, a single work in that Jordanes has not revised the *Getica* to make its account consistent in detail with that of the *Romana*. There are a series of blatant mistakes in the *Getica*, which are not in the *Romana*. In the *Getica*, Jordanes fused the usurpers Maximus and Eugenius (*Getica* 145). He has Rome sacked by Athaulf as well as by Alaric (*Getica* 159–60). He situates the Vandal king Gaiseric in Spain already around 407 (*Getica* 153). He places the usurpations Constantine (AD 407) and Jovinus (AD 413) incorrectly (*Getica* 165) in the reign of the Visigothic king Vallia (AD 415–18). He already has the Vandal king Gaiseric in Africa in 416 (*Getica* 173), and attributes to Attila a second invasion of Gaul (ibid. 225–26). None of these errors is repeated in the *Romana*.

Jordanes was working on the *Romana* when he was asked to write an epitome of Cassiodorus' history of the Goths. So he interrupted work on the *Romana* to compile the *Getica*. He only then finished the *Romana*. The two books were completed in close succession: the latest event in each book happened in 552.⁷ But since the *Romana* was finished last, it would have enabled Jordanes to correct some factual errors and omissions he had spotted in his earlier work, but he evidently did not go back to the *Getica* to correct those errors and omissions.

The *Getica*: Jordanes and Cassiodorus

Jordanes' two histories represent the two peoples, the Goths and the Romans as equals, not as equal in power, or in range of civilization, but as products of a long and glorious history. This perspective had not been created by Jordanes. It was already in the work of Cassiodorus which Jordanes was summarizing.⁸

6 W. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History, Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede and Paul the Deacon (AD 550–800)*, Princeton, 1988, pp. 20–111, makes the point that the two works complement each other. To investigate the views about the world of Jordanes and his aims as writer we must look at both works.

7 Latest event in *Getica*: Liberius sent with an army to Spain (*Getica* 303) in spring 552 (see E. Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, 2, Paris, 1949, pp. 820ff.; J.A.S. Evans, *The Age of Justinian*, London, 1996, p. 180). Latest event in *Romana*: the defeat of the Gepids by the Lombards (*Romana* 386) in 552 (Proc. BG 4.25.14). Neither mentions the defeat and death of Totila in 552. B. Croke, *Jordanes and the immediate past*, in *Historia*, 54, 2005, pp. 473–94.

8 Cassiodorus had combined a sequence of narratives involving Scythians or Getae, drawn mainly from Greek historians, into a long excursus which he inserted into the meager

But around 550, when Jordanes was working on the epitome of Cassiodorus' history, which became the *Getica*, it must have been a tricky undertaking to write an epitome of Cassiodorus' history of the Goths. For epitomising involves selection, and that cannot have been easy.

Cassiodorus had written in Italy as a minister of Theoderic, the great king of the Ostrogoths. Jordanes was writing at Constantinople, under the emperor Justinian, whose armies had not long ago liberated Italy by crushing the Ostrogothic Kingdom, but victory had been followed by a series of disasters. In 550 most of Italy was again under Gothic control, and an army was being prepared in the Balkans to crush the Goths once and for all. The war had been a disaster for Italy.⁹ How was a Gothic writer¹⁰ living at Constantinople handle this theme without either showing himself a disloyal subject of the emperor, or a betrayer of his own people? The circumstances certainly called for discretion and even some compromise with the truth.

Jordanes tells us that he has summarized Cassiodorus' long work from memory.¹¹ This cannot be altogether right. If he had relied entirely on memory his summary would inevitably have had serious gaps. In fact he tells us that he added material from other authors. I have argued elsewhere that he must

Gothic tradition about their past and so constructed the history of no less than 2030 years surveyed by Jordanes, *Getica* 313. On this see my forthcoming *Making a Gothic history*, cit. (n. 3).

- 9 Brief survey, A. Cameron, *Justin I and Justinian*, in A. Cameron, B. Ward-Perkins, M. Whitby (eds.), *Late Empire and Successors* (CAH, 14), Cambridge, 2000, pp. 72–28. More detail in G. Tate, *Justinien, l'épopée de l'empire de l'Orient*, Paris, 2004, pp. 773–805, cf. J. Moorhead, *The Byzantines in the West in the sixth century*, in P. Fouracre (eds.), *The Cambridge Medieval History*, 1, Cambridge, 2005, pp. 124–129.
- 10 Jordanes Gothic origin has been questioned. However Jordanes's denial that he has included inauthentic material, because he favoured the people from which he was descended, *quasi ex ipsa trahenti originem* (*Getica* 316), must surely mean that he denies having favoured his own people. For *quasi* in sense of *ut pote* without any implication of conditionality, see *ibid.* 90, also 103 and 307. However Alanoviiamuth, the name of Jordanes' father (unless corrupted), and the fact that Jordanes' grandfather was *notarius* of Candac, a leader of Alans, and that Jordanes himself had been *notarius* of a nephew of Candac (*Getica* 266), show that he also had close links with the Alans.
- 11 *Getica* 2–3. Jordanes tells us that he did not have a copy of Cassiodorus' work in front of him when he made his epitome, but he claims that he remembers its contents very well: "I have before this time (*ante hac*) re-read the books lent me by his steward for a three-day re-reading. The words I recall not, but the sense and the deeds related I think I retain entire. To this I have added fitting matters from some Greek and Latin authors. I have also put in an introduction and conclusion and have inserted many things of my own authorship" (transl. P. Mierow, Princeton, 1931).

indeed have had books at his disposal, and that quite a lot of passages in the *Getica* seem to be based on his own reading and research.¹² His history of the Goths nevertheless has important omissions, as well as narratives that concern the Goths only marginally.¹³ His selection of material seems to have been influenced not only by the books available to him, but also by topics that he found personally interesting, or thought would appeal to readers. But selection there certainly was, and we must ask what aims and priorities guided the selection.

The *Getica*: Themes and Message

Momigliano¹⁴ and Goffart¹⁵ and others have argued, in rather different ways, that Jordanes wrote as an East-Roman propagandist, that he was looking forward to the forthcoming conquest of the Ostrogoths, and indeed that his aim in writing the *Getica* was to persuade Gothic readers in Italy to welcome the imperial armies and to give up their separate identity by allowing themselves to merge with the Romans. The case has been argued with learning and insight, but I don't think that it is right. Does Jordanes have any message devised to meet the specific problems that would arise if that hypothetical situation came to pass? It seems to me at least that the answer is definitely that Jordanes has no such message. On the contrary, he appears to have deliberately refrained from any relevant comment whatsoever. Apart from a few sentences displaying his dutiful loyalty to his emperor,¹⁶ which have been heavily over-interpreted

12 See my *Making a Gothic history*, cit. (n. 3).

13 E.g. an *excursus* about the Vandals (*Getica* 167–172), and a disproportionately long account of Attila and his Huns (*Getica* 178–228, 254–258).

14 A.D. Momigliano, *Cassiodorus and the Italian Culture of his Time*, Proceedings of the British Academy, 41, 1955, pp. 207–245 = A. Momigliano, *Studies in Historiography*, London 1966, pp. 181–210, esp. 195–196, argues that Jordanes summarised Cassiodorus, at Cassiodorus' request, in order to make more easily available for propaganda purposes a work that already contained a political message, in that it expressed the hopes of Italian aristocratic exiles at Constantinople, who wanted to have a part to play in the reorganization of the country and did not contemplate the utter extermination of the Goths.

15 W. Goffart, *The Narrators*, cit. (n. 5), pp. 20–111. A summary of a longer sophisticated and stimulating argument, *ibid.*, pp. 97–105. Goffart takes Jordanes to have been in the employ of Justinian's court, or otherwise near it, carrying out a task designed to forward the interests of the Byzantine state in its reconquest of Italy.

16 *Getica* 313–315. The passage stands prominently at the very end of the treatise, but it merely proclaims the author's loyalty to the Emperor. It does not express any opinion on current politics.

by Momigliano and Goffart, there is nothing. For practical purposes Jordanes' history ends with the victory of Belisarius.¹⁷ Of subsequent defeats and disasters there is not a word in the *Getica*. Nor is there any indication that Jordanes expects, or even hopes, that the coming expedition will be successful. It is difficult to believe that Jordanes had not thought about the possible outcome of the military preparations, but he certainly does not give us any hint what these thoughts might have been.

Jordanes' *Getica* is not crudely pro-Roman. In the course of it Jordanes tells of many conflicts between Goths and Romans, and in the great majority of cases the Romans are shown to have been in the wrong. The Goths broke with Domitian, because of his avarice.¹⁸ The emperor Philip withheld the tribute due to the Goths.¹⁹ Ostrogotha was persuaded to make war on the Romans by some Roman veterans who had been wronged by Decius, who was to become emperor, but then was only a general.²⁰ The battle of Adrianople, and the destruction by the Goths of the eastern Roman army together with the emperor Valens in 378, was a turning point in the history of both Romans and Goths. Jordanes shows that that catastrophe was undoubtedly the Romans' fault, first because the emperor Valens had offended God by making the Visigoths Arians rather than Catholics, or as Jordanes says, Christians,²¹ then, because Roman generals treacherously attempted to assassinate the Gothic leaders at a meal.²² Alaric's campaigning in Italy undoubtedly did great damage to Italy and its people. Jordanes does not deny that the Italians suffered greatly at the hands of Alaric's Goths, but he also once more is careful to show that it was the Romans who were to blame, because they first made a treaty with Alaric and his Goths, and then treacherously attacked them.²³

Scholars have ignored this prevailing pro-Gothic bias, mainly because of two conspicuous passages towards the end of the book in which Jordanes justifies the campaign in which Justinian's armies under Belisarius overthrew the kingdom of the Goths²⁴ and then glorifies Justinian's victory. But since he was

17 *Getica* 313.

18 *Ibid.* 76.

19 *Ibid.* 89.

20 *Ibid.* 90.

21 *Ibid.* 132–133, 138.

22 *Ibid.* 136–137.

23 *Ibid.* 154–155.

24 Justification of war: *ibid.* 307. When Justinian heard of the death of Athalaric and the murder of his mother Amalasuentha "he was aroused as if he had suffered personal injury in the deaths of his wards, and sent his army against the Goth". Glorification of victory, *ibid.* 314–315.

writing at Constantinople under Justinian he could for his own safety scarcely avoid writing these passages. Moreover, he was after all also a Roman, or at least a federate, who had spent his younger years on the staff of a Roman general of federate descent.²⁵ He must have felt a dual loyalty—as many federates must have done.

If one surveys the whole of Jordanes' treatment of relations between Goths and Romans, one gets the impression that what he is trying to show is that the qualities of Goths and Romans complemented each other, and that consequently the Goths were ideal, perhaps even indispensable, allies of the Romans. Of course, the outstanding characteristics of the Goths are their warlike qualities, their militarism in today's jargon. This did not make them easy neighbours. Goths exploited the negligence of Roman emperors in the third century.²⁶ Jordanes does not blame them. Alaric's invasions of Italy were to have fateful consequences for both Romans and Goths, culminating in the sack of Rome itself. This is how Jordanes relates the start of these fateful events: "The sons of Theodosius began to ruin both empires by their luxurious living and to deprive... the Goths of their customary gifts. The contempt of the Goths for the Romans soon increased, and for fear that their valor would be destroyed by long peace, they appointed a king over them."²⁷ Alaric then proceeded to exhort his men to seek a kingdom by their own exertions rather than serve others in idleness.²⁸ This is of course an extremely oversimplified account of the rise of Alaric and his decision to invade Italy,²⁹ but such as it is, it clearly represents Alaric as an aggressor. Alaric and his Goths were to cause a great deal of damage to a great many people. But Jordanes did not criticize Alaric for starting a war. For him warlike courage and the seeking after military glory were precisely the supreme virtues of the Gothic people.

It was up to the Romans to accept the Goths for what they were and to make use of Gothic virtue. He maintains that it was difficult for the Romans to fight against any people whatsoever without assistance from the Goths,³⁰

25 Ibid. 266. Jordanes had been *notarius* of Baza, *magister militum*.

26 Ibid. 101, 104, 107.

27 It is interesting and perhaps significant that Jordanes, though a Goth, had no accurate information about the rise of Alaric, and evidently did not even look for what he could have found in Roman sources.

28 *Getica* 147 (transl. P. Mierow).

29 See P. Heather, *Goths and Romans*, Oxford, 1991, pp. 193–139; W. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops, Army, Church and State in the Age of Arcadius*, Oxford, 1990, pp. 48–85.

30 *Getica* 111.

and he shows that wise Roman leaders did employ the Goths as allies. The Tetrarch Maximian employed the Goths to defeat the Parthians (i.e. Persians).³¹ Constantine was supported by Goths in his campaigns against Licinius and against other enemies.³² Theodosius began his reign with an attack on the Goths, but he eventually made peace with them and they helped him defeat the usurper Eugenius.³³ The general Constantius, who later became emperor as Constantius III, was sent to Spain to fight the Goths, but instead he made peace with their king Vallia, with the result that Vallia gave up the captive princess Placidia, and agreed to become an ally of the Romans. This was in 416, and this treaty was a preliminary to the settlement of the Goths in Aquitaine in 418, which, surprisingly, is not mentioned by Jordanes,³⁴ even though it resulted in the foundation of a Visigothic kingdom in Gaul, and it was the existence of that kingdom which enabled Goths and Romans in alliance to defeat Attila's invasion of Gaul on the Catalaunian fields. Jordanes has given a disproportionate amount of space to Attila and his court, and indeed his death, and above all to the battle of the Catalaunian fields.³⁵ No doubt one reason for this is that he was impressed by Priscus' vivid account. Perhaps there was also a more personal involvement.³⁶ Above all the victorious battle demonstrates what an alliance of Goths and Romans could achieve, which is a principal theme of Jordanes' history. This theme is taken up for the last time in Jordanes' account of the life of Theoderic, which it dominates. In his last address Theoderic told the leaders of the Goths to honour their king (his successor Athalaric), to love the Roman people, and to make sure of the peace and good will of the emperor of the East, as next after God.³⁷

Of course much of the history of the relations of the Goths with the Roman Empire was far from peaceful. Jordanes could not completely ignore that fact. But he did attempt to minimize the episodes of hostility. So he omits all

31 Ibid. 110.

32 Ibid. 111–12. There is no mention of Constantine's war against the Goths.

33 *Getica* 145. In the *Getica* Jordanes merges the usurpers Maximus and Eugenius. In the *Romana* they are properly separated, *ibid.* 316–317.

34 The account of the treaty of 416 is followed by accounts of events which actually happened earlier, the usurpations of Constantine, in 407–411, and of Jovinus, in 411–413. In the *Romana* the chronological order is correct (325–326).

35 *Getica* 178–228, 253–259.

36 Ibid. 209. Andag, the father of the magister milium Baza, whose notarius Jordanes had been, had fought on the side of the Huns, and was said to have killed king Theodorid of the Visigoths.

37 *Getica* 304.

reference to Valens' Gothic war, though there is a full account in Ammianus, whose *History* Jordanes almost certainly knew and used.³⁸ He could not ignore the events that led up to the battle of Adrianople, but as we have seen, he carefully shows that the catastrophe was the Romans' fault. Alaric's ravaging of Italy culminating in the sacking of Rome itself was another episode that could not be omitted. But it looks as if Jordanes felt unhappy about having to describe these events, or at least to research them properly. The whole account is full of blunders. The Vandal king Gaiseric appears as a contemporary of Alaric.³⁹ Alaric's two invasions of Italy have been merged into one.⁴⁰ Athaulf, Alaric's successor, is credited with a second sack of Rome.⁴¹ The history of this decade is perhaps the most poorly researched narrative in the historical part of the *Getica*. Jordanes felt happier about subsequent campaigns of the Goths in Gaul and Spain, where he could present the Goths as defending inhabitants of the Empire from barbarian Franks, Burgundians, Alans, and above all Vandals, in fact as doing the Romans' work for them.⁴² As has been mentioned, the great Theoderic is presented as having consistently acted as a loyal friend and ally of the Empire.⁴³ Episodes in his early career, which would show Theoderic actually at war with the Empire are ignored.⁴⁴

Jordanes' Christian Pessimism

The impression left by the end of his history is that the glorious history of the Goths is over—but not because henceforth they and the Romans will be a single people. The tone of his account is far more pessimistic than that—and Jordanes deliberately made it so. For ignoring the fact that the Visigoths, who had been driven out of Gaul by the Franks, were building up a kingdom in Spain, he points out a parallel between the downfall of the Visigothic kingdom

38 See P. Heather, *Cassiodorus and the rise of the Amals: Genealogy and the Goths under Roman domination*, in *JRS*, 79, 1989, pp. 102–128, on pp. 111–116.

39 *Getica* 153.

40 Ibid. 154: the battle of Pollentia which belongs to the first invasion described as part of the second. Zosimos, following Eunapius, omits the first invasion altogether, along with all western events, AD 398–404.

41 *Getica* 153 & 159.

42 Ibid. 161–164. Antagonism to the Vandals recurs through the *Getica*.

43 Ibid. 289–292.

44 Malchus fr. 15; 18.3, 4; 20. P. Heather, *The Goths*, Oxford, 1996, pp. 138–146; A. Cameron, *Claudian, Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius*, Oxford, 1970, pp. 156–188.

in Gaul and the end of the Western Roman Empire.⁴⁵ When he reports the defeat of the Amal kingdom in almost its two thousand and thirtieth year,⁴⁶ he could not draw a parallel between this tragedy and anything that had happened, or was likely to happen, to the Eastern Roman Empire—at least it would have been extremely foolhardy to have suggested such a parallel. But if we look at what was happening in the 540s, defeats in Africa and in Italy, barbarian raids in the neighbourhood of Constantinople, bubonic plague,⁴⁷ we can see that Jordanes would have had good reasons for being pessimistic about the future also of the Eastern Empire.

It is worth noting that these struggles and set-backs are not mentioned in the *Getica*, which ends on a seemingly optimistic note, with the hopeful birth of a posthumous son of Germanus, and the glorification of Belisarius and Justinian as the victors over the Goths.⁴⁸ But Jordanes could create this optimistic conclusion only by practically ending his narrative prematurely with the surrender of Vitiges in 540, and by ignoring the unhappy events of the 540s. But the *Romana* corrects this omission.⁴⁹ Classical historians of Rome had always included disasters as well as victories in their narratives. When he was compiling a Roman history Jordanes could afford to be realistic as he could not be when writing a history of the Goths, a people with whom the Empire was at that time at war.

But it is fairly clear that Jordanes did in fact think that in the foreseeable future the Eastern Empire would come to an end, just as the Ostrogothic kingdom and the Western Empire had done already. When Jordanes sent his friend Vigilius copies of the two histories, he sent with the two books a letter in which he explained what could be learnt from them. In that letter Jordanes makes it quite clear that he felt pretty gloomy about the future of the Roman Empire. The reader of both the books will realize that the lesson to be drawn from the histories of the different peoples⁵⁰ is the same. The Roman history of the present is fit to be written as a tragedy. The benefit of historical reading will be

45 Cf. B. Croke, *AD 476, the manufacture of a turning point*, in *Chiron*, 13, 1983, pp. 81–119.

46 *Getica* 313.

47 On the plague: W. Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City*, Oxford, 2001, pp. 52–54, 309–310. See also M. Meier, *Das andere Zeitalter Justinians*, Göttingen, 2002, pp. 307–341, P. Horden, *Mediterranean Plague in the Age of Justinian*, in M. Maas (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, Cambridge, 2005, pp. 134–160.

48 *Getica* 315.

49 *Romana* 376–388.

50 ... *quatinus diversarum gentium calamitate comperta ... ad deum te convertas*.

to become aware how the Roman state arose, how it was expanded, how it brought all lands into subjection, and how it lost them again owing to the ignorance of its officials.⁵¹

In the letter to Castalius as in the letter to Vigilius, Jordanes shows himself to be a committed Christian.⁵² He ends the letter to Vigilius, which sets the tone for both works, with a quotation from the first Epistle of John the Apostle: "Dear friend do not set your heart on the world or anything that is in it. For the world passes away with all its attractions, but who does God's will shall remain for ever."⁵³ The message is close to both that of the preface and that of the concluding remarks of Orosius' *Contra paganos*. Orosius had been asked by Augustine to refute the pagans who blamed Christianity and the abandonment of the old gods for the sack of Rome by showing that pagan Rome had already suffered a long succession of disasters. Disasters are sent by God as a punishment for sin, and hence they are a feature of all human history. As for the sack of Rome, Orosius argues that the Christian Alaric had been unusually considerate and humane in his treatment of the population of the captured city.⁵⁴ In his own narrative of the sack of Rome, Jordanes took over this last point: he stresses that Alaric did not set fire to the city as barbarians are wont to do, and he did not allow his men to do serious damage to churches.⁵⁵

Jordanes and the Dual Identity of Federates

While Jordanes certainly used Orosius, and undoubtedly was considerably influenced by the *Contra paganos*, neither the *Romana* nor the *Getica* is a religious treatise.⁵⁶ Neither work conforms to the genre of Christian Apologetic. Both are essentially works of secular historiography. The writing of history was

51 *Romana* 388.

52 Cf. J. O'Donnell, *The aims of Jordanes*, in *Historia*, 31, 1982, pp. 223–240.

53 1 *Ep.* John 2.15ff.

54 Orosius 7.39. Text ed. C. Zwangmeister, *CSEL*, 5, 1882, transl. R.J. Defferari, *Fathers of the Church*, 50, 1964, and A.T. Fear, *Orosius, Seven Books against the Pagans*, Liverpool, 2010.

55 *Getica* 156.

56 The handling of religion must have been difficult. Jordanes was a Catholic, as he makes unmistakably clear in his condemnation of Valens, the Arian emperor. But adherence to what its opponents called the Arian heresy was an important component of Gothic identity.

part of classical culture.⁵⁷ Upper-class Romans had received a thorough rhetorical and highly literary education, and they continued to use and display what they had learnt at school in speech and writing for the rest of their lives. The literary letter was the medium which gave upper class Romans an opportunity to exercise and display their literary culture in daily life. Boethius thought that through his part-time philosophical writings he was also performing a service of public instruction.⁵⁸ Literary culture could also be exercised in the medium of historiography, as indeed it was by Cassiodorus. But the writing of history was—and still is—very time-consuming, and was therefore taken up by only relatively few individuals. Nevertheless it was as somebody's hobby that most of histories came to be written in classical as well as in late antique times.⁵⁹ Jordanes would not appear to have had the advantage of a rhetorical schooling. He tells us that he only ceased to be 'illiterate'⁶⁰ after his 'conversion'.⁶¹ This cannot be literally true since he had served as a notary to a general, a post which certainly required the ability to write. But this self-assessment of Jordanes does suggest that as far as the higher literacy was concerned he was self-taught, and that he became literary only late in life. While his writings show that he had read a fair amount of Latin, and probably also of Greek literature,⁶² his Latin in Mommsen's edition has very many of those 'vulgar' features of everyday speech, which the rhetorical education had as one of its aims to eliminate.

The exact character of Jordanes' Latinity is nevertheless not easy to define. Mommsen's text is very vulgar indeed, as can be seen from his indices of

57 The prestige of literary culture in Late Antiquity is eloquently described by H.I. Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'Antiquité*, Paris, 1950, pp. 410–414.

58 *Pertinere tamen videtur hoc ad aliquam reipublicae curam, elucubratae rei doctrina cives instruere*, Boethius' *In categorias Aristotelis libri quatuor*, PL 64, 2016, cited by A. Gillett, *The purpose of Cassiodorus' Variae*, in A.C. Muiray (ed.), *After Rome's Fall, Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History (Essays presented to Walter Goffart)*, Toronto/Buffalo/London, 1998, pp. 37–50, on p. 49.

59 Examples in W. Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians*, Basingstoke/New York, 2007.

60 *Getica* 266: he had been '*agrammatus*'.

61 *Ante conversionem meam*. Conversion to what? To a more pious way of life? Ordination? To the life of a monk? (which at this time meant a dedicated ascetic life, but not necessarily life in a monastery). The phrase was used by Cassiodorus in the preface of *De orthographia* (Gramm. Lat. VII. 144, Keil). A.D. Momigliano, *Cassiodorus*, cit. (n. 13), p. 209, n. 97, has references to discussions of its possible meaning.

62 The *Getica* certainly has great stylistic variety, ranging from clumsy and 'vulgar' to quite elegant.

Orthographia and *Lexica et Grammatica*.⁶³ But Mommsen's *apparatus* also shows that some manuscripts are very much more classical than the one on which Mommsen principally based his text. It may be that the oldest manuscript was a particularly bad one. Alternatively, it may be that later copyists corrected what Jordanes had actually written to make it more classical. The Latin of Jordanes has been examined,⁶⁴ but a modern study would probably be useful. This would also advance the much discussed problem of Jordanes' use of sources.⁶⁵

Jordanes probably took up writing when he was fairly old,⁶⁶ one might say, as an activity for his retirement. When he took to writing he must have thought that his Latin, and his knowledge of Latin literature, were good enough for him to be able to do it. The literary climate of the time would have encouraged him. The traditional strict division between literary genres, and particularly that separating writing that was high and classical from that which was unclassical and popular, was breaking down.⁶⁷ By taking up the writing of history Jordanes could now show that while he was of barbarian descent, he was also

63 See Th. Mommsen, in *MGH AA V*, 167–200.

64 C. Schirrer, *quae inter Iordanem et Cassiodorum intercedat commentatio*, Dorpat, 1858; E. Wölflin, *Zur Latinität des Jordanes*, in *Archiv für lateinische Lexicographic und Grammatik*, 11, 1900, pp. 361–368; F.R. Werner, *Zur Latinität der Getica des Jordanes*, Diss. Halle, 1908; O.J. Zimmermann, *The Late-Latin Vocabulary of the Variae of Cassiodorus*, Washington (DC), 1949.

65 Schirrer thought that Jordanes obtained his information almost entirely from Cassiodorus, Mommsen suggests that he also got some information from Orosius and Socrates, the ecclesiastical historian. But Ciopollo argues that Jordanes has actually consulted all, or at least most, of the authors whose names he cites: C. Ciopollo, *Considerazione sulle Getica di Jordanes e sulle loro relazioni colla Historia Getarum di Cassiodoro Senatore*, in *Memorie delle Reale Accademi delle Scienze di Torino*, 2/43 (Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche), 1893, pp. 99–134. Recent scholars tend to give Jordanes more credit for original research than their predecessors. G. Caldi, *The influence of sources on the language of Jordanes*, in El. Dickey and A. Chachoud (dir.), *Colloquial and Literary Latin*, Cambridge, 2010, pp. 357–375.

66 N. Wagner, “*Getica*”, *Untersuchungen zum Leben des Jordanes und zur frühen Geschichte der Goten*, Berlin, 1967. The grandfather of Jordanes served as *notarius* to the barbarian leader Candac in the mid-fifth century, after the break-up of the empire of Attila (*Getica* 265–266). Almost a hundred years before Jordanes wrote the *Getica*, Jordanes himself had been notary to Beza, *magister militum*, nephew of Candac.

67 A. Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, London, 1985, pp. 24–28, citing as examples of serious works not aspiring to classical literary standards the *Chronicle of Malalas* and the *Christian Topography* of Cosmas Indicopleustes. See also the articles in *AnTard*, 9, 2001: “Démocratisation de la culture”.

thoroughly Romanised. At the same time he was still extremely conscious of his Gothic origin, and proud of it too. It is more than likely that he saw that there was something problematical in this duality. I would suggest that it was the problematical nature of his own condition that led him to take an interest in history, and especially in the relations between Goths and Romans. In the *Romana* he demonstrates that Roman history was now also his history, while the *Getica* shows why it is possible to be a good Roman without abandoning one's Gothic heritage. The *Getica* is in a sense a work of personal apology, but only in a sense, because apart from the paragraph in which he introduces himself he has related no experiences of his own.⁶⁸

The *Getica* presents the Goths as a people with a long and glorious history, like that of the Romans. But Jordanes' interest was not focused on that history as such. It was not important for him to tell the complete story, or even to tell it as accurately as possible. That is why he has allowed his history to be so discontinuous, and incomplete, and possibly also why he kept episodes he knew were unlikely to be true. But one theme runs consistently through the *Getica*: relations between Romans and the Goths. And there is one lesson to be learnt from this history, which is that provided that both sides—and particularly the Romans—play fair, which in the past they too often have not done, the relationship can be highly beneficial to both parties.

So Momigliano and Goffart were right to conclude that Jordanes was an advocate of cooperation between Goths and Romans. But in my opinion they were wrong to suggest that his *Getica* was a topical tract, a work of propaganda, specifically designed to assist the settlement of Italy after the imperial expeditionary force had been successful, and Italy had been reunited with the Empire. Jordanes' histories are altogether backward-looking. His examples, on the one hand, of the benefits of cooperation between Goths and Romans, and, on the other, of the calamitous consequences of its absence, belong to the past.

It has been often been maintained that the *Getica* was written to glorify the Goths, that it was a pioneering history of a Germanic *gens* written by a member of that *gens*, and thus the model and ancestors of Bede's *History of the English People*, and of Paul the Deacon's *History of the Lombards*. But analysis of the contents of the *Getica* does not really support this interpretation, as Goffart has pointed out. However Goffart's alternative, that Jordanes anticipated the defeat of the Goths in Italy and wrote to assist the peaceful settlement of that country by the amicable fusion of the Gothic and the Roman peoples does not work either. As I have noted earlier, Jordanes seems to have quite deliberately

68 Procopius (e.g. *Wars* III.12.3–5), Priscus (Fr. 11.2 [Blockley] account of embassy) and Ammianus (e.g. XVIII. 6.19–7.6) relate own experiences.

avoided any comment that had a bearing on the coming campaign, and its likely consequences. Moreover a work which is addressed to people in Italy, whether Goths or Romans, would necessarily have to focus on the land and people of Italy. The *Getica* is not so focused. If it has a focus, it is on the Balkans. Nor does Jordanes ever suggest that conflict between Goths and Roman should, or even could, be ended by a fusion of the two people. He treats Goths and Romans as entirely distinct. He glorifies both, and he points out the great benefits, above all in the military sphere, that can be achieved when the two peoples cooperate in alliance. This would appear to be a view which one might expect a federate to hold, the view of an individual who has given a considerable part of his life to serving the Empire, without ceasing to feel loyalty to his own people.

It is an outlook which could develop in two ways. A descendant of several generations of federates serving the empire might come to feel entirely Roman, marry a Roman wife, and join the imperial aristocracy.⁶⁹ However when, or where, the institutions of the empire faded away, the allegiance of the federate would come to focus on the ethnic successor state, and he would come to look upon his people not as partners but as heirs of the Romans. That outlook can be observed in the *History of the Kings of the Goths* of Isidore of Seville (c. 560–636). Isidore was of course neither a federate nor a soldier, nor even of barbarian descent. His family was Roman, and he was from c. 600 bishop of Seville in the Visigothic kingdom of Spain. But his characterization of the Goths is remarkably similar to that of Jordanes. He too stresses their outstanding military qualities, and the benefits the Romans have derived from their support. But unlike Jordanes, Isidore is quite explicit about the outcome of this story. “They (the Goths) waged such great wars and had such a reputation for glorious victory, that Rome itself the conqueror of all peoples submitted to the yoke of captivity . . . the mistress of all nations served them like a handmaid.”⁷⁰ “Subjected, the Roman soldier serves the Goths, whom he sees being served by many people and by Spain itself.”⁷¹ But not even Isidore anticipated the fusion of the two people, although that was undoubtedly going on. And though one result of the fusion of Goths and Romans in Spain was the triumph of the Roman religion and language, the identity that prevailed was that of the

69 A. Demandt, *The osmosis of Late Roman and Germanic aristocracies*, in E.K. Chrysos and A. Schwarcz (dir.), *Das Reich und die Barbaren*, Vienna / Köln, 1989, pp. 75–86.

70 Isidore, *History of the Kings of the Goths* 67. *MGH AA* 11. 266–295 on 274, transl. K.B. Wolf, *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Medieval Spain*, Liverpool, 1990, p. 109.

71 *Ibid.* 70.

Goths. The same happened, perhaps somewhat earlier, in Gaul where much of Roman culture survived, but the victorious identity was that of the Franks.

Federates played an important role in the history of the Later Empire. The term 'federates' is ambiguous. In the fourth century it was used to describe units supplied under treaty by allied tribes, who might be settled either inside or outside the borders of the empire. The federates of the sixth century were a category of units of the regular Roman army recruited largely but not exclusively from foreigners, a kind of foreign legion.⁷² In an age when the legal status of formal Roman citizenship did not have the same importance as it had had under the early empire⁷³ there were numerous individuals serving the Roman state who had a kind of dual identity, in that for practical purposes they had become Romans without having given up their ancestral identity.⁷⁴

Jordanes' precise status is uncertain. He had been a notary of a Roman *magister militum* who's two names, Gunthigid and Baza, seem to be Germanic, and who was related to the Amal dynasty. Moreover one Candac, an uncle of Gunthigid on his mother's side, had been the leader of a band of Alans settled in Moesia by the Emperor Marcian. Gunthigid was clearly a federate in the older sense of the term. Jordanes himself was, on his own evidence, of Gothic descent.⁷⁵ He served as a *notarius*,⁷⁶ but he seems to have served the man and not the office. So he was probably not a soldier, or even a civil servant, but a civilian employee. His relationship to his chief was therefore something like that of Procopius to Belisarius, that of an assistant and adviser.⁷⁷ Jordanes' grandfather had occupied the same position under Gunthigid's uncle, Candac, as long as the latter lived.⁷⁸ While our information about Jordanes life and

72 A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602*, Oxford, 1964, pp. 663–66, nn. 132–133. R. Scharf, *Foederati, von der völkerrechtlichen Kategorie zur byzantinischen Truppengattung*, Vienna, 2001.

73 W. Liebeschuetz, *Citizen status and law in the Roman empire and the Visigothic kingdom*, in W. Pohl and H. Reimitz (dir.), *Strategies of Distinction, the Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300–800*, Leiden, 1998, pp. 131–152, repr. in J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Decline and Change in Late Antiquity* (Variorum Collected Studies), Aldershot, 2006, no. 12.

74 G. Greatrex, *Roman Identity in the sixth century*, in G. Greatrex and S. Mitchell, *Ethnicity and Identity in Late Antiquity*, London, 2000, pp. 267–292.

75 See n. 9 above.

76 The principal subordinates of a *magister militum* did not include a *notarius*. See A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, cit. (n. 71), pp. 597–599.

77 *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* IIIB, sv. *Procopius* 2, 1060–1066, on 1060, but Jordanes was surely not a lawyer.

78 Jordanes introduces himself: *Getica* 265–266.

career is hopelessly inadequate, we have enough to make it likely that he was brought up and spent his life among men of Germanic, or at least 'barbarian', descent who were in the service of the Empire. Jordanes is the only member of this group, at least as far as we know, to have articulated what many must have felt as regards their dual identity. That is one reason why the *Getica* are important.

Habitus Barbarus: Did Barbarians Look Different From Romans?*

The Problem

The purpose of my lecture is simply to argue that the barbarians who entered the Roman Empire in the so-called Age of Migrations could be recognised, that their appearance was different from that of the older inhabitants of the Roman Empire. I don't mean that every barbarian could immediately be distinguished as such. The Gothic king Theoderic is reported to have said that that the poor Roman imitates the Goth, and the well-to-do Goth the Roman. Theoderic tells us that Romans and Goths adopted each other's *habitus*, but in doing so he takes it for granted that there was such a thing as a typical Goth for a Roman to imitate.¹ I am therefore in good company when I argue that it is meaningful to talk of a typical barbarian appearance.

Why is it worth while to argue a point that might seem common sense, and in no need of discussion? Certainly many generations would have taken the reality of a *habitus barbarus* for granted. Why should it be necessary to argue the point now? There are two principal reasons. One reason is that: there is a very strong tendency among some historians of this period today to minimise the importance of barbarian ethnic identities and hence also to minimise the impact of the barbarians on the empire. One aspect of this is a strong desire also to reduce to a minimum the differences between barbarians and Romans, and to exaggerate the extent to which the barbarians were romanised.

The other reason why the distinctness of the *gentes* now needs to be emphasised is archaeological. For many years archaeologists believed that they could establish the presence of settled barbarians from grave goods, especially metal ware, belt buckles, brooches, jewellery with garnet and glass cloisonné ornament, gilt bronze eagles. Now it has been established that the assumption that the presence of such objects is certain proof of the presence of barbarians is a mistake. These objects were also worn by Romans, and what is more, even the barbarians themselves seem not to have used many of these items before they

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1 *Romanus miser imitatur Gothum et utilis Gothus imitatur Romanum* (Anon. Vales. 61).

entered the Empire.² So many archaeologists have concluded that this evidence is completely irrelevant.³

I am not an archaeologist and I am not going to discuss the significance of grave goods. This paper will be concerned with literary sources and with the fact that there are dozens of passages in Roman authors which seem to assume that barbarians could be recognised by appearance, for instance length of hair, and shape of beard, as well as by dress, notably the wearing of trousers, and distinctive boots. To make a case that the barbarians were indeed so assimilated that they were indistinguishable from Romans you must disqualify all the literary evidence. Arguments can certainly be found which can be applied more or less plausibly to a large number of descriptions of barbarians to support the case that these descriptions are not to be taken at face value. I will return to these arguments later. Here there is not the space to look at the material as a whole and to discuss in every case whether a text describes a stereotype or the reality. Six examples will have to suffice. But I think that together they make a strong case that there was indeed such a thing as a *habitus barbarus*, and that in general barbarians could be distinguished from Romans by their outward appearance, even if Roman fashions were sometimes, and in some circumstances, adopted by barbarians and *vice versa*. My interpretation of the texts is argued in each case against that argued by von Rummel. This unfortunately

2 P. von Rummel, *Habitus barbarus. Kleidung und Repräsentation spätantiker Eliten im 4. und 5. Jahrhundert*, Berlin–New York, 2007, (*RGA Ergänzungsbd.*, 55).

3 Eg. S. Brather, *Ethnic identities as constructions of archaeology, the case of the Alamanni*, in A. Gillett (ed.), *On Barbarian identities: critical approaches to ethnicity in the early Middle Ages*, Turnhout, 2002, pp. 149–173, on p. 174: “I cannot see any way that archaeology could identify ethnic identities of the past. To search for ethnic groups follows the nationalistic imagination of the last two hundred years, and does not meet the expressiveness of archaeological sources”. Since he wrote this, Brather has become more interested in the way archaeologists and historians can cooperate. See his volume *Ethnische Interpretationen in der frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie: Geschichte, Grundlagen und Alternativen*, Berlin – New York, 2004 (*RGA Ergänzungsbd.*, 42), and *Kleidung, Bestattung, Identität*, in S. Brather (ed.), *Zwischen Spätantike und Frühmittelalter. Archäologie des 4. bis 7. Jahrhunderts im Westen*, Berlin – New York, 2008 (*RGA Ergänzungsbd.*, 57), pp. 237–273. The difficulty of drawing conclusions about ethnicity from archaeological finds is also explained by A. Poulter, *Invisible Goths within and beyond the Roman Empire*, in J. Drinkwater and B. Salway (eds.), *Wolf Liebeschuetz Reflected: Essays presented by colleagues, friends, and pupils*, London, 2007 (*BICS Suppl.*, 91), pp. 169–182. See also G. Ripoll, *Romani e Visigoti in Hispania: problemi di interpretazione del materiale archeologico*, in P. Delogu (ed.), *Le invasioni barbariche nel meridione dell'impero: Visigoti, Vandali, Ostrogoti*, Cosenza, 2001, pp. 99–117.

gives a misleadingly one-sided impression of his overall position, which is in fact very much more nuanced.⁴

Six Examples of habitus barbarus

¹ Ambrose, *Epistula extra Collectionem* 4.9–10

In 381 the bishops of the council of Aquileia, or more likely Ambrose of Milan writing on behalf of the bishops, addressing the emperors Gratian, Valentinian II and Theodosius I, accused Julius Valens, the Arian bishop of Milan and Ambrose's rival in the following terms:

This man, so it is said, dared to appear in the view of the Roman army wearing a collar and bracelets, dressed in the manner of tribesmen (*more gentilium*), being desecrated by Gothic impiety (*impietas Gothica profanatus*), behaviour which without doubt is sacrilege, not only in a bishop, but anybody who is a Christian, even if the priests of Gothic impiety possibly appear like this [...]. This man, who could not remain in his see at Poetovio (Petau, Ptui, but more likely in fact Mursa), now throws his weight about at Milan, after the overthrow, let us not say betrayal, of his country.

It is clear that Valens is accused of treason and sacrilege and that the wearing of the collar and bracelets *more gentilium* is given as evidence of his treason. We don't know whether anything of this is true, but the accusation would not make sense if there was not a way of wearing a collar and bracelets which was known to be specifically Gothic. That collars and bracelets were in fact worn by Roman soldiers does not invalidate this conclusion. If there really was no difference between the dress of a Roman soldier and a Goth, Ambrose could not have made this accusation, and if he had nevertheless done so, the emperors would have thrown out the accusation as ridiculous.

⁴ For a full and balanced explanation of his views see P. von Rummel, *Gotisch, barbarisch oder römisch? Methodologische Überlegungen zur ethnischen Interpretation von Kleidung*, in W. Pohl and M. Mehofer (eds.), *Archäologie der Identität*, Wien, 2010, pp. 51–77 (*Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters*, 17). His central point is that what was considered 'barbarian' in Late Antiquity was rather a phenomenon of the Empire than of the *barbaricum*. He agrees that there was a *habitus barbaricus*, and that it had an important function as a mark of distinction.

2 Victor de Vita, *Historia persecutionis Africanae provinciae* 2.8

In 483/4 the Arian clergy asked Hunnerich king of the Vandals to stop all men and women (*quoscumque mares vel feminas*) dressed in the barbarian manner (*in habitu barbaro incedentes*) from entering a catholic church. Hunnerich then ordered the catholic bishop of Carthage to enforce the orders, But Eugenius refused. Insisting that the house of God is open to all, he points out that many catholics dress in the manner of them (*in habitu illorum* i.e. of the Vandals), because they serve in the royal household. Thereupon king Hunnerich ordered torturers to be posted outside the catholic churches, who were to scalp any men or women who appeared to belong to their *gens* (*in specie suae gentis ambulantes*) and were intending to enter the church. On the face of it, this is conclusive evidence that members of the Vandalic *gens* could be recognised by their appearance (*specie*) and dress (*habitus*). Von Rummel has tried to avoid this conclusion by arguing that what Victor call *habitus barbarus* was not the ethnic *habitus* of the Vandals as such, but a distinct form of dress worn by members of the royal court.⁵ But this is contradicted by the wording of the text which far from limiting the prohibition to enter Catholic churches to members of the court applies it to all men and women dressed *barbaro habitu*, and having the appearance of belonging to the Vandal *gens*. There can only be one conclusion: Vandals in their characteristic make up⁶ looked different from Romans.

3 *Pelliti* (Dress Made of Animal Skins, that is Fleece, Fur or Leather)
with Special Reference to Synesius, *De regno* 22 (PG 66.1093A
of 399 AD)

In very many passages barbarians are described as *pelliti*, i.e. as wearing garments made of animal skins. The epithet is applied regularly to Goths. This has led von Rummel to ask a very reasonable question: how was it possible for *pelliti* to become something like a synonym for Goth, unless there was some

5 P. von Rummel, op. cit. n. 2, p. 191: "Victors *habitus barbarus* hatte wohl nichts wirklich Barbarisches oder Fremdes an sich, sondern war schlichtweg die Kleidung der Führungselite des vandalischen Afrika". He goes on "jener Gruppe die man unabhängig von ihrer Herkunft und Religion als Vandalen bezeichnen kann". Yes, a modern scholar can formulate a definition of the Vandal elite (*Führungsschicht*) which excludes every notion of ethnicity and tribal cohesion, but there is no reason to suppose that either Victor, or the Vandals themselves thought of these people like that.

6 There is of course no indication what particular details of dress or of appearance were characteristically Vandalic.

truth in the epithet.⁷ This I think is incontrovertible. Von Rummel tries to avoid the obvious conclusion that if a man wore skin based clothing he was more likely to be a Goth than a Roman by arguing that the term *pelliti* is applied as a term of abuse not to Goths alone but to the whole military aristocracy (which included Goths) by members of the old and established civilian aristocracy.⁸ But this does not work. Synesius describes a Gothic general (either Gainas or perhaps Alaric) as follows: ‘the man with the skin jerkin (σισυροφόρος) marches in command of those who wear the *chlamys*, and . . . such a one divests himself of the sheepskin (κώδιον) in which he was clad to assume a toga (τήβεννος), and enters the senate chamber’. The man in the sheepskin is contrasted not only with the civilian senator, but also with the Roman officer wearing the *chlamys*. The skin clothing is distinguished from the typical Roman military as well as from Roman civilian wear. It is not used to denigrate a new, but Roman, rising military aristocracy. It is used to distinguish Goths from Romans.

- 4 The Marriage of Galla Placida and Athaulfus (Orosius 7.43, Olympiudorus fr. 24 Blockley) in 414 AD

Orosius was reliably informed [...] that he (Athaulf) [...] was at first eager to blot out the Roman name and to make the entire Roman Empire that of the Goths alone, and to call it Gothia instead of Romania. When however he discovered [...] that the Goths by reason of their unbridled barbarism could not by any means obey laws, considering that the laws of the state, without which a state is no state, should not be abrogated, he chose to seek for himself the glory of restoring and increasing the Roman name by the forces of the Goths.⁹

7 “Wie konnte sich der Begriff der *pelliti* [...] geradezu zu einem Synonym der Goten entwickeln wenn nicht doch eine gewisse Wahrheit hinter den Bildern steckte?” (P. von Rummel, op. cit. n. 2, p. 151).

8 “Innerhalb eines erbitterten Streites um die Macht hinter dem Thron [...] in dem [...] sich die zivile Hofpartei gegen aufstrebende Militärs durchsetzte, war die negative Darstellung der *pelles* [...] eines der wirksamsten [...] Kampfmittel der siegreichen (i.e. zivilen senatorischen) Partei” (P. von Rummel, op. cit. n. 2, p. 155). In my opinion competition between an old civilian and a new military aristocracy is quite irrelevant to the references to skin-based clothing by Synesius and Sidonius Apollinaris which I have cited, as it is to very many other contexts in which allusions to *pelliti* occur.

9 Orosius, 7.43, tr. R.J. Deferrari in *Orosius, Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, Washington, 1964, pp. 361–362.

So Athaulf, king of the Visigoths, the successor of Alaric, is said to have adopted a policy which corresponds almost exactly to the barbarian attitude to the empire defined by Walter Goffart as follows: "The barbarians could be recruited into the imperial enterprise because they asked for nothing more than to carry it forward and to share its blessings".¹⁰ But Athaulf's assumption behind this cooperative strategy was that the Goths were different from the Romans, that the qualities of the two peoples far from being identical, complemented each other. The Romans had law and the Goths vigour. The Roman system needed an infusion of Gothic vigour to survive. In pursuit of this policy Athaulfus married Galla Placidia the daughter of the emperor Theodosius. Olympiodorus tells us that the marriage was solemnised according to Roman custom, and that Athaulfus wore the chlamys of a Roman general, and other Roman clothing.¹¹ Olympiodorus stresses the Romanity of the ceremony and the dress because it was deliberate and unusual, in fact an act of policy. Normally Athaulfus would not have been dressed like a Roman.

5 The Evidence of Sidonius Apollinaris (c. 430–479 AD)

The Gallic noble man Sidonius Apollinaris lived at a time when the Visigoths settled in Aquitania had established their kingdom, and were expanding its boundaries, and the Burgundians had been settled in Savoy. Sidonius had a great deal of business with both groups of barbarians, and he knew them well. He has left us a number of descriptions. It is *apriori* unlikely that such a man's account of the appearance of barbarians should be derived entirely from traditional literary stereotypes. There are four principal passages: a letter in which Sidonius describes the Visigothic King Theoderic II (*Ep.* 1.2); a verse panegyric which Sidonius delivered at Rome in 456 to celebrate the entry into the consulate of the emperor Avitus (*Carm.* 7), and which includes a description of the Gothic king's advisory council. Another letter (*Ep.* 4.20) has a description of Sigismer, a barbarian¹² nobleman and his entourage, who were engaged on a visit to his prospective father in law, the king of the Burgundians, informing us that the young man was 'made up in ethnic manner and fashion'.¹³ Finally we

10 W. Goffart, *Barbarian tides. The migration age and the later Roman Empire*, Philadelphia, 2006, p. 238.

11 Olympiodorus fr. 24 Blockley.

12 *Ep.* 4.20. The prince could have been either a Burgundian or a Frank.

13 *Ibid.*, 1, *ritu atque cultu gentilico ornatum* . . . P. von Rummel, op. cit. n. 2, p. 180 comments: "literarische Referenz an alte Barbarenvorstellungen [...] *miles* [...] und *babrbarus* waren [...] auch in ihrem realen Auftreten kaum mehr voneinander zu trennem". No, the phrase does not simply repeat a literary topos, but like the rest of the description it is part of a

have *Carmen* 12, a short poem in which Sidonius apologises for not writing the epithalamium he has been asked to compose by describing the Burgundian soldiers billeted in his mansion, whose disturbing presence makes it impossible for him to compose a more ambitious poem. He tells us that the Burgundians are very tall, that they speak German,¹⁴ that they have long hair, and that they use rancid butter as we would hair cream.

None of these descriptions has the realism and detail and objectivity of a modern anthropological report. They are all highly literary. Each has a different tone:¹⁵ they are very general, they lack detail necessary to visualize the dress described, and there can be no question of distinguishing the characteristic dress of Goths from that of Franks or Burgundians, but they have several features of dress in common. The dress of the Gothic elders (or senators),¹⁶ and of the noble followers of Sigismar,¹⁷ and probably also of king Theoderic II¹⁸ leaves the knees bare. The elders,¹⁹ the guards (*satellites*) of Theoderic²⁰ and probably also the noble followers of Sigismar²¹ wear a garment of skin. The elders of king Theoderic and the followers of Sigismar wore the same kind

report of what Sidonius has seen. The description, like most classical descriptions, is very generalised, lacking specific detail. The phrase *ritu atque cultu gentilitio* points out that the colourful elegance of the young prince was not what a young Roman aristocrat would wear.

14 *Carm.* 12.4: *Germanica verba*.

15 The verse panegyric is highly literary. Although is addressed to a senatorial audience, (*Carm.* 7.8: [...] *nempe patres* [...]), which was surely by now overwhelmingly Christian, its centre-piece is nevertheless a speech by Jupiter to an assembly of gods (*Carm.* 7.17–599). The highly literary description of the Gothic king's councillors alludes to Virgil's portrait of Charon, the ferryman of the dead.: Compare *Carm.* 7.453: *stat prisca annis viridisque senectus/consiliis* with *Aen.* 6.304: *iam senior, sed cruda deo viridisque senectus*.

16 *Carm.* 7.456: *nec tangere possunt allatae suram pelles*. A military tunic reaching the knees is still described as Gothic' by the emperor Maurice in *Strategikon* 12.1 (late 6th century); he also mentions 'Gothic' shoes.

17 *Ep.* 4.20.2: *vestis alta* [...] *vix appropinquans poplitibus exertis*.

18 *Ep.* 1.2.3: *maximus in minime rugosis genibus honor*.

19 *Carm.* 7.456: *allatae pelles*.

20 *Ep.* 1.2.4: *pellitorum turba satellitum*.

21 *Ep.* 4.20.2: *clausa bullatis latera rhenonibus*. Some scholars have translated *rhenones* as 'belts'. But according to Isidore, *Etymologiae* 19.23.4 *renones sunt velamina umerorum et pectoris usque ad umbilicum atque intortum villis adeo hispida ut imbrem respuant*. It will not do to reject this definition with other such information in *Origines* 19.21.1–2 as 'purely conventional', with W. Pohl, *Telling the difference: signs of ethnic identity*, in W. Pohl and H. Reimitz (eds.), *Strategies of distinction. The construction of ethnic communities 300–800*, Leiden – Boston – Cologne, 1998, p. 47.

of hairy boot tied with a knot.²² In the first letter Sidonius gives what is evidently an eye witness description of King Theoderic to his brother in law who has asked for it. In the second he describes Sigismer and his followers, and particularly their weapons²³ to a friend whom he thinks interested. In neither case is he at all likely to have simply repeated literary stereotypes. The poem about the Burgundians is humorous, but that does not mean that it cannot be realistic.

6 Ennodius, Bishop of Ticinum (Pavia) c. 514–521 AD,
Carmen 2.57–59²⁴

Around half a century after Sigismer's visit to his father in law, Ennodius, bishop of Ticinum (Pavia), at the time when Theoderic, the Ostrogoth, ruled Italy, wrote three epigrams mocking a certain Iovinianus for presenting himself wearing incompatible items of dress. In the first epigram he is mocked for sporting at the same time a Gothic beard (*barbaricam faciem*) and Roman attire (*Romanos cultus*); in the second epigram we are told that a dark beard (*nox oris nubile*) is casting a cloudlike shadow over a Roman covering (*Romuleum tegetem*). Iovinianus is once more being mocked for combining a barbarian facial appearance with a Roman form of dress. But the comment is ironical. Although *teges* sounds a bit like *toga*, the basic meaning of the word is a mat woven from reeds.²⁵ So applied to an item of dress it must be a slangy metaphor for a humble and inelegant one.

In the third epigram, *nobilibus tollis genium, male compte, lacernis, discordes miscens inimico foedere proles*. Iovinianus is told that his ugly hair style—or beard (*male compte*) is disgracing the noble *lacerna*. The *lacerna* (overcoat) had for centuries been worn by Romans. Indeed it was sometimes worn by Ennodius himself (*Carm* 1.1.17–18). But it was definitely not an elegant, never mind a noble garment. According to Cicero, a *lacerna* must not be worn over a *toga*.²⁶ So *nobilibus lacernis* is ironic—just like *teges* in the second epigram. The inelegant hair-style and/or beard, jars even with the humblest of Roman

22 *Carm.* 7.457: *peronem pauper nodus suspendit equinum*. *Ep.* 4.20.2: *pedes [...] perone saetoso talos adusque vincebantur*.

23 *Ep.* 4.20.3: *lanceis uncatis securibusque missilibus*

24 *MGH*, AA, VII ed. F. Vogel, 1885, p. 157 nr. CLXXXII. The reference to Ennodius wearing a *lacerna* is *ibid.* p. 193, nr. CCXLV.

25 Martial, 11.32.2; 11.56.5.

26 Cicero, *Phil.* 2.30.76: (*redii*) [...] *cum calceis et toga; nullis nec gallicis, nec lacerna*. Suetonius, *Aug.* 40.5: *ne quem posthac paterentur in foro circove nisi positis lacernis togatum consistere*. So also Gellius, 13.21.6.

wear, and the combination won't do because it involves 'the mingling of discordant races in a resented alliance.'²⁷ This is what is already announced by the heading shared by all three epigrams: *versus de Ioviniano qui cum haberet barbam Gothicam lacerna vestitus processit*. Iovianus has combined Roman fashion with a Gothic beard and these are two distinct fashions, which simply do not mix. I would however suggest that the satire of the three epigrams is not so much directed against 'gothicising' by Romans generally, as against the conduct of Iovianus on a particular formal occasion, for which neither the *lacerna* nor the Gothic beard were the appropriate dress, whatever the occasion may have been. The epigram certainly shows that Romans sometimes adopted Gothic fashion, but also that there was such a thing as a distinct Gothic fashion.

Dress, Ethnicity and Archaeology

As I have mentioned earlier, a number of arguments have been used to discredit the abundant testimonials to the distinct appearance of barbarians. Here are some of the most important. One very frequently used argument is that the Roman authors used an image of 'the barbarian' which was formed early, indeed even taken over from Greek ethnographic literature, and never modified to make it correspond to actuality. W. Pohl suggests that this stereotype continued to be used as a code to distinguish 'us' the Romans' from 'them' the barbarians.²⁸ The barbarian stereotype was applied to discredit individuals, possibly but not necessarily of barbarian origin, making use of an assumed cultural superiority of 'us' (the Romans) over 'the others', (the barbarians), irrespective whether these differences really existed or not.²⁹ It seems to me

27 *Nobilibus tollis genium, male compte, lacernis, discordes miscens inimico foedere proles.*

28 W. Pohl, op. cit. n. 21, pp. 65–66: "[...] the ethnographic code developed in the Greek and Roman world, [...] aimed at a distinction between 'them' and 'them', without abandoning the basic categories of 'us' (Greeks and Romans) and 'them' (barbarians)". However, this passage is not included in the reprint of the chapter in T.F.X. Noble (ed.), *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdoms*, I, London – New York, 2006, pp. 120–167. I find it difficult to disagree with most of the detailed observations in Pohl's immensely learned and intelligent article, but the overall tendency of the paper is to my mind extremely one-sided, and biased, with a view to argue away the identity and cohesion and solidarity of the *gentes*. Since the sense of identity and cohesion of the *gentes* was a fact, and it was that what made them formidable, this conclusion seems to me a *reduction ad absurdum*.

29 The standard Roman views of the barbarian *gentes* certainly do not do them justice. See Y.A. Dauge, *Les barbares, recherches sur la conception romaine de la barbarie et de la civilisation*, Brussels, 1981. Essays in A. Gillett (ed.), *On Barbarian identities: critical approaches to ethnicity in the early Middle Ages*, Turnhout 2002, develop the ideas of Walter Pohl minimising the importance of barbarian ethnic identities as presented by Roman authors.

that this argument is ultimately based on contemporary sociological discourse of identity, which is not totally applicable to Antiquity and therefore leads to questionable conclusions. Another argument commonly used to disqualify references to features which are supposed to be characteristically barbarian is to point to evidence that these supposed marks of barbarian distinction were also adopted by Romans.³⁰ Another argument is that the barbarian stereotype is applied to soldiers of every kind—of whom of course many were of barbarian origin—by civilians in order to discredit members of a new increasingly powerful military aristocracy.³¹

Some of the passages which assume a distinct barbarian appearance can be disqualified more or less convincingly by one or the other of these arguments. It is in any case always difficult to disprove a negative. But when one considers the large number and variety of the texts that seem to take for granted the reality of distinct barbarian appearance, very serious doubts arise, and it begins to look as if perhaps the stereotype, the standard portrait of the barbarian, does bear some relationship to reality. After all even a caricature to be effective must in some way resemble the person that is being caricatured.

This does not of course mean that every barbarian looked different from every Roman, and that every barbarian could be identified as such at first sight. It does not even mean that the features and items of dress which differentiated barbarians from Romans necessarily represented an immemorial folk tradition. Some may well have been part of a traditional folk culture, but others, for instance Arian Christianity, certainly originated within the Empire. What I mean is that there was a *habitus* which was typically barbarian, and that the *habitus barbarus* was a reality. The different *gentes* presumably did not look alike either, but our information is not detailed enough to enable us to differentiate between ‘them’ and ‘them’, for instance to tell how, say, Vandals looked different from Goths.

I am now going to leave my own field and trespass into that of the archaeologists in order to suggest that archaeologists should not totally reject the possibility that the distribution map of grave goods could have a bearing on the

But that does not exclude the possibility, even likelihood, that the biased caricature has some factual basis. Above all descriptions are unlikely to be totally anachronistic when the described are visible members of the society of the writer.

30 See P. von Rummel, op. cit. n. 2, *passim*.

31 Ibid., p. 400. “Diese Mode war durchaus unrömisch, da sie nicht der traditionellen Repräsentationskultur der konservativen senatorischen Elite entsprach. Als Mode des spätrömischen Militäradels war sie aber [...] vollkommen römisch”. Against this argument see my note 8 above.

ethnicity of the individual whose graves have been excavated. I am thinking of the interpretation of maps like that of the distribution in central Europe of *Zwei Fibel Tracht brooches*³² and of the distribution of *Armbrust* and *Bügelfibeln*.³³ Is it not quite likely that the wearing—or at least the placing in a burial—of a particular kind of dress, involving the use of particular forms of brooch in one region, but not in another can tell us something about the inhabitants of the respective regions? I am not arguing that for instance the presence of two brooches of a particular kind in a particular position in a single burial is conclusive evidence of the ethnic identity of the person buried there. I am arguing that when a large number of grave goods of a particular kind occur in a particular region but not in neighbouring regions that this may tell us that the regions have different ethnic identities. It is evidence which should be taken into account, particularly if literary sources too suggest that the area was inhabited by more than one people. I am not denying that excavation provides a different kind of evidence from that provided by reading texts, and that it throws light on different aspects of the past, that is on structures rather than historical events and individuals. I also agree that in many cases one approach cannot confirm or refute the evidence of the other. Why this is so has been fully explained by Brather.³⁴ But I would insist that the insights provided by archaeology and the study of texts are complementary, and that the use of one kind of evidence should not exclude that of the other.³⁵

Habitus Barbaras and the Problem of the Accommodation of the Barbarians

Why does it matter whether or not barbarians have a distinct appearance? If the barbarians who settled in the Empire typically looked different from Romans that would suggest that no matter how much they had absorbed from the surrounding Roman civilization, the barbarians *gentes* wanted to maintain their distinction, and so to preserve their identity. This does not mean that every item of distinctive barbarian appearance would have been deliberately

32 P. von Rummel, op. cit. n. 2, fig. 32 on p. 280.

33 Ibid., p. 308.

34 See S. Brather, *Kleidung, Bestattung*, cit. n. 3. Brather's approach (in that paper) led him to the unlikely conclusion "there is no way to equate for example the Goths of the Black Sea in the third and fourth century with the Goths of Italy in the sixth century" (ibid., p. 150). But it seems to me that his position in *Ethnische Interpretationen*, cit., n. 3, is much less radical.

35 For a constructive combination of archaeological and literary evidence see J.F. Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome, 213–496*, Oxford, 2007, especially pp. 80–116 on settlement of Alamanni, and pp. 117–144 on their society.

chosen to be a marker of identity.³⁶ Most items of group *habitus*, unlike the uniforms of modern armies, have not been consciously designed and adopted, but have evolved as a result of communal life, and are maintained from habit. If many Goths wore their hair longer than most Romans, this was not because they had deliberately decided to wear it like that in order to look different. They wore their hair long because previous generations had worn their hair like that, and they were not going to change their hair style just in order to look like Romans.

But by maintaining signs of their distinct identity Goths, Vandals, Franks and Lombards displayed and maintained their solidarity and cohesion, as they had to do in order to uphold their collective interest, and this was important even though barbarian confederation formed and reformed continuously. In fact a strong sense of ethnic identity made it easier for the dominant *gens* to absorb outsiders. I would argue that the persistence of ethnic sense of identity over many decades, and even centuries, is necessary to explain the role of the *gentes* in the fall of the Roman empire. By this I mean for example the persistence of the Visigoths as a formidable military force from the battle of Adrianople in 378 to the Arab conquest of *Hispania* in the early 8th century. An ethnic sense of identity and ethnic solidarity is necessary to explain the fact that unity of these bands could survive defeats, years on the move, death of leaders, and in the case of the Franks regular division of the kingdom between sons of the ruler. Visigothic Spain was no longer 'Romania', it was transformed into *gens et patria Gothorum*. Even today we have some vivid reminders of the strong and lasting sense of identity of the Franks. After all the conference at which this paper was delivered was held in the School of the Franks, the *École française*. Peter Brown (who is not always consistent) was right when he wrote: "In the context of the fifth and sixth centuries, separateness, stridently asserted rather than assimilation seemed to open up the shortest route to power and wealth".³⁷

Once again I ask why should it be necessary to argue the point now? The reason is that there is today a very strong tendency to minimise the impact of the barbarians on the empire, and one aspect of this is a strong desire to mini-

36 See W. Pohl, *op cit.* n. 21, p. 22: "Distinctive features might not always be chosen on purpose, but somebody had to make a conscious effort to regard them as such". I would argue go further that most distinctive features are customary, and that most individuals make no conscious effort either to adopt, or to recognise them. They are self-explanatory. A conscious effort is only needed to abandon them.

37 P. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christianity*, Oxford, 1996, p. 104.

mise the differences between barbarians and Romans.³⁸ This tendency has a strong objection to the concept of 'ethnogenesis'. It focuses on assimilation, and closes its eyes to the preservation of difference.³⁹ To quote Goffart:

The drastic changes in the Roman world during Late Antiquity were the result not of barbarian invasion, but of a necessary simplification or militarization of the organisation of the Empire, a more or less deliberate and controlled response of the elite of the Empire to the problems that had mounted since the third century;⁴⁰

Peter Brown takes a similar view:

It is profoundly misleading to speak of the history of western Europe in the fifth century as the age of the barbarian invasions. Such a melodramatic view assumes in the barbarians a level of autonomy and of destructive potential which they did not possess. It was rather an age of brutal downsizing. This was caused by a sudden and unexpected relaxation of the power of the Roman state.⁴¹ The situation of the Roman west was rather more like that of modern Russia after the devolution of the Soviet empire in 1989, than that of central Europe during the horrors of the Second World War. What frightened contemporaries was not the prospect of endless barbarian invasions. It was the prospect of a power vacuum in their own region.⁴²

On this view the barbarians role in the end, or if you like the transformation, of the Empire was essentially passive.⁴³ They were basically instruments

38 See W. Liebeschuetz, *The debate about the ethnogenesis of the Germanic tribes*, in H. Amirav and B. ter Haar Romeny (eds.), *From Rome to Constantinople. Studies in honour of Averil Cameron*, Leuven – Paris – Dudley MA, 2007, 241–355.

39 E.g. C.E. Bowlus, *Ethnogenesis, the tyranny of a concept*, in A. Gillett, op. cit. n. 3, pp. 241–256.

40 W. Goffart, op. cit. n. 10, pp. 234–237. Even those who disagree with Goffart on important issues will agree that discussion of this age owes a good deal to him.

41 So also W. Goffart, op. cit. n. 10, pp. 230–239 on 'the long simplification'.

42 P. Brown, op. cit. n. 37, p. 102.

43 In fact, different ethnic groups displayed different degrees of aggressiveness. J.F. Drinkwater, op. cit. n. 35, has made a strong case that contrary to the impression given by Latin sources the role of the Alamanni in their relations with the empire was essentially passive. But the role of Goths, Huns and the Vandal coalition in the destruction (or transformation) of the empire was surely anything but passive.

employed by the imperial government. This is how Goffart summed up this position:

In a panorama of relentless shrinkage, barbarians as recruits or suppliants for peace could consistently be perceived as lower cost alternatives (to traditional regular army units).⁴⁴ The cost-benefit equation of their request offered an opportunity not to be missed. [...] Vandals and Goths introduced no alternative to the *nomen Romanum*, they were not rivals proposing a different way of life, or competing for loyalty [...] The barbarians could be recruited into the imperial enterprise because they asked for nothing more than to carry it forward and to share its blessings.⁴⁵

How is all this relevant to the discussion of the accommodation of the barbarians? If the barbarian federates were basically mercenaries who wanted a pension for their service they would have been happy with a safe income, of the kind Goffart's model would provide them. But if they were a group with a strong sense of cohesion, and solidarity, in fact a migrating *gens*,⁴⁶ they would want more. They would want an ethnic home, and a high degree of independence. And in my opinion this is what the big groups wanted, and this is what they got. The heated and inconclusive debate among modern scholars as to how exactly the settlement about the barbarians was carried out,⁴⁷ is not about administrative detail, it is about the fundamental reasons for the end of the imperial structure and the transformation of the Roman world.

44 So also P. Brown, *op. cit.* n. 37, p. 103: "Their families received land as if they were veterans. They had access to the produce of estates as if they were regular soldiers billeted on the civilian population. Elsewhere local garrisons collected a share of the region's taxation for their own use".

45 W. Goffart, *op. cit.* n. 10, p. 23. See also his eloquent *Rome's final conquest, the barbarians*, in *History's Compass*, 6/3 2008, pp. 855–883.

46 In fact the dichotomy, necessitating a choice between either roaming mercenary troops or a migrating *gens*, is much too simple. It ignores a spectrum of intermediary forms of organization. Moreover the process of ethnogenesis might turn what started as a pure mercenary band into a *gens*, particularly if the core of a mercenary band (like Alaric's Goths) was derived from a single ethnic group, as is argued in W. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, Oxford, 1990, pp. 48–80.

47 Peter Brown, *op. cit.* n. 37, p. 103.

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Barbarians and Taxes*

1 Introduction

One of the problems occupying scholars researching the Dark Ages to day is the extent of the specifically barbarian or Germanic contribution to the transformation of the Roman world. To day no scholar would argue that the barbarian successor kingdoms were totally or largely, Germanic. It is the opposite thesis, that the successor kingdoms were still in all essential Roman, that the transformation that took place was the result of natural evolution, and that Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Vandals and Franks contributed nothing, or practically nothing of their own traditions, which is very popular today.¹

The study of what became of the Roman world system of taxation in the successor kingdoms can contribute to this discussion. The Later Roman Empire had an elaborate and very sophisticated system of taxation, which made use of coins, bureaucracy, and a great deal of written documentation. None of these things existed among the *gentes* before they entered the Empire. How did the Germanic kings deal with this situation?

Nobody looking at the Later Roman could fail to observe that it had a complicated and highly sophisticated tax on land, and that while the greater part of the revenue from that tax was spent on the army, a not inconsiderable part was used to pay the large bureaucracy required for the administration of the tax. This land-tax and the large bureaucracy were features which sharply distinguished the organisation of the Later Empire from both that of the early Empire and that of the barbarian successor kingdoms. In the course time the land tax² and the bureaucracy disappeared from the barbarian kingdoms. But the decline of bureaucracy and of taxation did not take place at the same rate or at the same pace in the different kingdoms.

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1 For instance, if the barbarians had no recognisable characteristics, it would follow that they could not have made any contribution of their own to the world that was coming into being.

2 Here I accept the views of Goffart 1989, pp. 213–231 rather than Durliat 1990.

2 The Ostrogoths

The Roman system remained most nearly intact in the Ostrogothic kingdom. There the provincial, and a considerable part of the central bureaucracy, tax collecting by the *curiales*, and the technical vocabulary of taxation, seem to have survived. What was the part of the Goths in this? The Ostrogothic system for the distribution of state burdens was described as one in which the Goths fought and received donatives from their king, while the Romans paid tax.³ But this is a simplification. It is certain that some tax was also paid by Goths.⁴ Even the king's private property, the *divina domus*, paid.⁵ Theoderic's original followers were given land allotments (*sortes*).⁶ The question is whether the Goths paid tax on all land owned by them, or whether the original grant, the *sors* was exempt. The evidence is ambiguous. On the one hand the passages already quoted stating that Goths must be made to pay tax do not mention that this ruling does not apply to the *sors*. One would expect any exemption to be mentioned, if it existed. Jones concluded that the *sortes* did not enjoy general immunity.⁷ On the other hand the one document which relates directly to the grant of a *sors*, the granting by Theoderic of an estate to Butila in 507–511, almost certainly included immunity from taxation.⁸ Jones thought that Butila's immunity was an extra privilege. But it also looks as if certain 'ancient barbarians' settled near Savia, that is presumably federates that had received landholdings before the arrival of the Ostrogoths, only began to pay tax when Theoderic made them liable for property they had acquired from their Roman wives.⁹ So it may be that these federates had not been made to pay tax on their original grant of land. Similarly we know that neither the Vandals nor

3 Cassiodorus, *Variae* VIII, 14 (279.10), VII, 5 (364.12–23), VIII, 26 (257.12).

4 Cassiodorus, *Variae* IV, 14 (507–11): *qui enim debent ad fiscum celerius esse devoti, nisi qui capiunt commoda donativi, quando amplius de nostra humanitate recipiunt quam stipendii iure praestetur*, also I, 19 (507–511): *quicumque Gothorum fiscum detractat implere, eum ad aequitatem redhibitionis artet*. So also: IX, 9 (526–527).

5 Cassiodorus, *Variae* XII, 5 (364.32).

6 I do not accept the view that the barbarians received a share of the taxes rather than land as argued by Goffart 1980 and Durliat 1988; criticised by Liebeschuetz 1997, Barnish 1986 and Cesa 1982.

7 Jones 1964.

8 Cassiodorus, *Variae* II, 17.

9 Cassiodorus, *Variae* V, 14, but here too there is no reference to an original holding that would remain exempt. They must pay tax *quolibet titulo praedia quaesiverunt*.

the Visigoths settled in Spain paid tax on their original *sors*.¹⁰ So uncertainty remains on the question of the tax liability of the Ostrogothic *sortes*.

But one thing is clear, the tax burden under the Ostrogothic king was lower than it had been under the Goths. For the reinstatement of the Roman system in its full stringency by the Byzantine government caused profound discontent, and not only among the Goths. It was this which provided the opportunity for the rising of Totilla which came close to reversing Belisarius' reconquest of Italy.¹¹

Since the Ostrogoths seem to have kept most of the old Roman taxes,¹² reduction in the weight of taxation could have happened in two ways. In the first place it is likely that Theoderic could afford to lower the rate at which taxes were levied because his army, that is the Goths, now received their basic payment in land. Secondly the activities of Justinian's tax revisers after the 'liberation' suggests that the tax registers had not been kept up to date under the Ostrogoths. But there is no evidence that the Goths had an insurmountable aversion to paying taxes.

3 The Vandals

Our information about the kingdom of the Vandals is very much less than that we have about the kingdom of the Ostrogoths. We have nothing corresponding to Cassiodorus' *Variae*, nor any collection of royal edicts. But unlike the tax *status* of the Ostrogothic *sortes*, that of the *sortes* of the Vandals is clear: the land assigned to the Vandals by Gaiseric after he had conquered Roman North Africa was tax free (Procopius III, 5, 14), and since the Vandals kept the whole income of some very fertile land, they became extremely wealthy (IV, 3, 26). But Gaiseric maintained, or even increased, the tax on the Roman land. Subsequently the Vandals evidently continued to collect the tax where they could, for instance in Sardinia (I, 10, 26), and even sometimes raised

10 *L. v. x*, 16 (Antiqua).

11 Procopius VII, 1, 32; 21, 14. But according to Jones the *tertia*, the tax paid by all landowners, or perhaps only by those who had not had to yield a third of their land to Goths, was an additional tax. I would suggest that the "*tertia*" only represented a portion of the existing land-tax which was earmarked for use in connection with the Gothic settlement, and also marked out land that might still be required for assignment. Amalgamating the taxes seems to have had the effect that henceforth Theoderic would not be pestered by demands to assign the land on which the *tertia* had been paid (Cassiodorus, *Variae* I, 14 of 507–511).

12 Jones 1964, p. 254.

taxation (Victor de Vita II, 2). But it would seem that they, like the Ostrogoths, neglected the bureaucratic side of the tax system. After the reconquest the registers were in disorder, or even destroyed, and Justinian sent envoys to make a new tax assessment (Procopius, *wars.* IV 8.25) and raised the taxes (Secret History. XVIII.10). Needless to say this was unpopular and provoked rebellion (*ibidem* XVIII. 10). In this way too the situation was like that in Ostrogothic Italy. In both kingdoms the tax burden was lighter under the barbarians than it had been under the Romans.

4 Visigothic Spain

The administrative history of the Visigoths is complicated by the fact that it falls into two distinct phases, that of the Visigothic kingdom in Gaul and (408–507) and their subsequent kingdom in Spain, the precise date of whose start is in doubt, but which lasted until it was destroyed by the Arabs around 716. Institutions of the Visigothic kingdom in Gaul as consolidated by Euric (466–86) are known from the Code of Euric of which only fragments have survived, and the *Breviarium* of Alaric produced on the orders of Alaric II in 506, which is an abbreviated version of the Theodosian Code, including some commentary on laws, in effect emending them to fit changed circumstances. We can't be sure how far the *Breviarium* represents an exact and up-to-date account of how administration was carried out under the Visigoths in Gaul. But it is certain that it reflects the situation of the Gallic kingdom far more closely than that of the kingdom in Spain.¹³

The kingdom of the Visigoths in Spain survived much longer than the kingdoms of the Ostrogoths and of the Vandals. This means that its institutions had time to undergo evolution. We can to some extent follow this evolution by comparing the Gallic evidence, the *Breviarium* of Alaric and the fragmentary Code of Euric with the successive Codes published by the Visigothic king of Spain starting with Leovigild, the *Leges Visigothorum*. The relevant information from literary sources, chronicles, letters, and lives of saints is scanty.

By the time the Visigoths had established a more or less stable kingdom in Spain, they had spent more than a century inside the Roman Empire, and were considerably Romanised. But the Roman institutions of the country in

13 It is an important weakness in E.A. Thompsons' otherwise excellent *The Goths in Spain* (Oxford, 1969) that he has assumed that the laws of the *Breviarium* give a more or less correct view of the administration of Spain in the sixth century. It is reasonable to assume that the Visigoths took over a more nearly intact taxation system in Gaul than they did in Hispania.

which they had settled had been disrupted by a century of war, and therefore were certainly considerably further removed from those reflected in the *Breviarium* than the institutions of at least southern Gaul. Like the barbarian settlers in Italy and North Africa, the Visigoths in Spain were settled on individual lots. The rules of settlement—*hospitalitas*—were the same as those had been applied for the settlement of the Visigoths in Gaul. The Goth received two third of an estate, while the Roman kept one third, while in Italy it had been the Goth who received only one third while the Roman kept two thirds. These Gothic allotments survived as a distinct category of land until the end of the kingdom, for laws concerning them were repeated in the Code of Erwig (680–87). The Goths occupying these allotments were certainly exempt from the land tax. (*L. v. x*, 1, 16).¹⁴

All the laws concerning the *sortes* are classified as *Antiquae*, that means that they had been included in the Code of Leovigild (568–86), and therefore could not have been issued later than that Code. In fact most of them seem to go back to the Code of Euric. None of the later laws is concerned with the *sortes*,¹⁵ which must have become something of a historical curiosity, though the fact that they were not subject to the land tax surely meant that they remained a desirable property.

In fact the difference between Goths and Romans seems to have become increasingly unimportant after the Goths had converted to catholic Christianity in 587. Very few of the later laws mention ethnicity, whether Roman or Gothic.¹⁶ The laws of the late sixth and seventh century apply equally to all inhabitants, and the relations between the two peoples sharing Spain, the Goths and the Romans had become unproblematical, and did not require further legislation. The time was approaching when all inhabitants of Hispania would identify themselves, and each other, as Goths, and the country as the *patria Gotorum*.

But we do not know when that process was completed, or even whether it had been completed when the Arabs put an end to the Visigothic Kingdom. Isidore bishop of Seville (c. 600–636), and the anonymous author of the *Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium* (around 630?) certainly still distinguish

14 But were Goths immune on other land they might acquire? *L. v. x*, 1, 16 is not clear, cfr. Thompson 1969, p. 134.

15 *L. v. x*, 1, 8 of 682, Erwig's emendation of *x*, 1, 6, does not concern the *sortes*.

16 A late exception is *L. v. ix*, 2, 9, the army law of Erwig (680–87), which is addressed to both Goths and Romans, and orders members of both groups to take one tenth of their slaves with them when they join the army for a campaign. The reason may be that at one time only Goths had been called up (cfr. *L. v. ix*, 2, 2 *Antiqua*), and Erwig wanted to emphasise that now everybody had to go.

between men of Roman and of Gothic descent, as evidently did king Erwig (680–687). Moreover the great majority of the magnates of the kingdom who signed the minutes of the ecclesiastical councils continued to have Germanic names right to the end of the Visigothic kingdom. It even seems as if there was a deliberate policy of ‘gothicising’ the administration, for in the reign of Reccesuinth (643–672) the Latin title of *judex territorii* appears to have been replaced by the Gothic *thiufadus*.¹⁷

The land tax survived. It was no longer collected by *curiales* as under the Roman system, but by representatives of the royal government. A letter written in 592 by the bishops of the tax district of Barcelona (comprising Barcelona, Tarragona, Egara, Gerona and Ampurias) shows that the administration of taxation has changed. Collection—at least in this district—is no longer in the hands of *curiales*,¹⁸ but is carried out by *numerarii*, appointed by the central head of taxation, the Count of the Patrimony. Tax is still assessed in kind, but the assessments in wheat and barley are commuted into gold at a fixed rate, which has to be agreed by the bishops of the five cities.¹⁹

It is probably significant that much of the characteristic technical vocabulary of Late Roman taxation, for instance the words *caput*, *iugum*, *vectigal* do not occur in the Visigothic laws, and taxes take up proportionally very much less space in the Visigothic Code than they do in the Codes of Theodosius and Justinian. This may of course reflect the character of the Codes rather than the reduced importance of the land tax, but it is more likely that the Visigothic kings made fewer laws about taxation because the income from taxes was not as important for them as it had been for the imperial government. Nevertheless it is certain that the land tax survived to the end of Visigothic rule.²⁰ It seems to have taken the form of a tax on vineyards, on arable land,²¹ and on slaves.²² It is not clear how far this represents continuity with the Roman system, or to what extent the Roman system had been changed. Nor we do know anything about the rate at which the tax was assessed, or indeed the number and importance of immunities granted by the king.

17 Thompson 1969, p. 215.

18 *L. v. v.*, 4, 19 (Chindasuinth 642–53) shows that *curiales* still existed at least in some cities, and that they still had to perform certain functions, but the duties were tied to land so that anybody who bought the land of a *curialis* had to take on his duties.

19 *De fisco Barcinonensi*, Mansi x, 473ff.

20 See Ervig's (680–87) tax law; *LV, edictum Ervigii*, Zeumer 1902, p. 479. Martin Viso (2006) has recently drawn attention to evidence on taxation in Visigothic *Hispania* on the very difficult slate tablets, for example Velázquez 2001, n. 45–48.

21 *L. v. v.*, 4, 19; Erwig's edict (Zeumer 1902, pp. 478.18–25; 479.41–480.2).

22 *L. v. x.*, 2, 9f, xii, 2, 13 (Zeumer 1902, p. 420.1).

It appears that Church property was taxed, because in 693 Egica (687–702) ordered the sixteenth council to enact that cathedrals must pay royal taxes exclusively out of the revenues of the cathedral church and not of the endowments and offerings of parishes.²³ The term '*immunitas*', in the sense of immunity from taxation, is not found in the Visigothic laws. As will be seen there are strong arguments in favour of the view that among the Franks the land tax was practically destroyed by the granting of immunities to churches, monasteries and magnates.²⁴ We do not know how far this happened in Spain. There is some evidence that the Visigothic Kings might reward service with grants of land rather than a salary.²⁵

5 Merovingian Gaul

The evidence for taxation in the Frankish kingdom in Gaul is much more extensive than that from the kingdoms of the Goths or Vandals. But the historian trying to reconstruct the history of the land tax in Frankish Gaul is nevertheless faced with considerable difficulties. We have different kinds of evidence for different periods. First there are the writings of Gregory of Tours (539–94), then we have charters conferring immunities, then there are some fragmentary accounts of the estates of the abbey of St Martin of Tours,²⁶ finally the so-called polyptychs.²⁷ All need to be supplemented by Lives of saints. The different kinds of evidence pose different problems of interpretation. They also cover different geographical areas and different periods of time, so that it is almost impossible to get a complete picture of the state of taxation in Gaul as a whole at any one time, or to reconstruct its evolution through time.

Two points can however be made immediately. In spite of the relative abundance of evidence the references to land tax in the surviving documents are remarkably few. This is particularly true of documents recording sales, or gifts, or privileges, where one would have expected some statement of how the transaction would affect the recipient's obligation to pay land tax. In Roman documents involving change of ownership of land there is generally some

23 *L.v., tomus Egicani regis*, Zeumer 1902, p. 482.23.

24 See below.

25 I. Toledo 13; *Vita Fructuosi* 3, cfr. King 1972, pp. 59–62; Sánchez Albornoz 1971, pp. 327–32 on landgrants (*stipendia*) of Visigothic kings to their *fideles*.

26 Gasnault 1975: fragments of an account of c. AD 700.

27 Fossier 1978.

reference to the way the transaction will affect the land tax,²⁸ not so it would seem on documents issued in Gaul under the Franks. On the other hand there are plenty of references to tolls and customs of different kind. To judge simply by the frequency of mention in documents, one would conclude that compared with the emperors Frankish rulers were very much less interested in the land tax, while remaining just as interested, or even more interested, in customs and other irregular exactions.²⁹ That is a general impression. The detailed facts as to what actually happened to the Roman system of taxation are much more difficult to establish. There remains much room for debate.

Taxes in the Time of Gregory of Tours

The Franks established a stable kingdom in Gaul only after a lengthy period of disorder. So one would not expect to find the Roman system intact, in the way that it was more or less intact under Theoderic and the Ostrogoths. The position in 6th century Gaul was much more like that that in Visigothic Spain. From the evidence of Gregory of Tours especially, it is clear, that the Roman land-taxation, organised on the basis of *civitates*,³⁰ survived in a simplified form. Much of the late empire technical vocabulary of taxation has been lost. We no longer hear of such terms as *iuga*, *capita*, *annona*, *vestis militaris*, *aurum coronarium*, *professio*, *delegatio*, *indictio*. The terms used are different and less specialised.³¹ The tax is no longer collected by decurions, but by officials of the king.³² But collectors might still be liable for the tax they failed to collect,³³ and at least in the sixth century, public tax registers were kept, though not regularly kept up to date.³⁴

28 See n. 42 below.

29 The immunity giving charters mention a wide range of tolls and exactions see Kölzer 1998–1999, p. 123, see also n. 43 below.

30 Council of Clermont AD 535, 1.74. The tax was assessed on land but probably, at least in some places, on persons, perhaps on slaves and / or *coloni* (nn. 37 and 68 below).

31 *Census*, *redhibitiones*, *agraria*, *inferenda*, *lucrum terrenum*, all of which could also refer to a private levy or rent, as for instance *agrarium* and *pascarium* do in Marculf 2, 39.

32 Marculf 1, 8, newly appointed counts, dukes or patricians are admonished: *quicquid de ipso accione in fisci dicionibus speratur per vosmet ipsos annis singulis nostris aerariis inferatur*. Gregory of Tours, *HF* VII, 23, 9, 30 on role of *exactores* at Tours: *ibidem* 10, 7 (at Clermont).

33 Gregory of Tours, *HF* IX, 30 (Poitiers, Tours); X, 7 (Clermont).

34 Gregory of Tours, *HF* X, 7 (Clermont).

The Tax-Position of the Franks

In Merovingian Gaul there seems to have been no legal category of land corresponding to the 'sortes' of the Ostrogoths, Visigoths and Vandals. If some of the Franks had been settled within the empire by agreement with the Roman government on the basis of *hospitalitas*,³⁵ this has left no traces in the evidence. But it has been suggested that all free-born Franks, as members of the ruling people enjoyed immunity from the land tax. Certainly some Franks appear to have thought that they ought not to be required to pay the tax. Thirty seven years after the death of Clovis, some Franks lynched the over enthusiastic tax official Parthenius at Trier.³⁶ When king Childebert died in 584, Franks attacked, burnt the house, and confiscated the property of one Audo, who held the office of *iudex*, probably at Paris, and would have killed the man himself if he had not sought refuge in the cathedral under the protection of the queen. His offence was that he had imposed taxes on Franks 'who had been free men under the late king'.³⁷ It would seem reasonable to deduce from that phrase that all free born Franks were by legal privilege exempt from paying tax. But would this deduction be correct?

The incident involving Audo is the only passage in the writings of Gregory of Tours to imply a general exemption from taxation of free born Franks. There is no reference to such an exemption either in the Frankish law codes, or in the collections of legal *formulae*,³⁸ or in the surviving charters. When immunity of

35 Some Franks had certainly been settled in Gaul after they had been defeated by the Roman army in fourth century, for instance by Julian. But the Franks of Clovis and his successors were not simply military settlers who had set up a kingdom of their own like the Visigoths in Aquitaine.

36 Gregory of Tours, *HF* III, 36, cfr. *PLRE* 2, *sv* Parthenius.

37 Ibidem VII, 15: *multos de Francis, qui tempore Childiberthi Regis senioris ingenui fuerant, publico tributo subegit*, cfr. *PLRE* 2 *sv* Audo. The reason for the Frank's insistence on their free birth have may have been the existence of a head tax on slaves (and or *coloni*?). See Desiderius of Cahors, *Epistolae* II, 7, *MGH Epistolae Merov. et Karol. Aevi*, I, 206: *quos ad urbem vestrum (Cahors) descriptionem mancipiorum inquirendam direximus*.

38 I would suggest that contrary to the generally held view, Marculf I, 19 (compiled around 700), the qualification for entering the clergy, *si memoratus ille de caput suum bene ingenuus esse videtur, et in poleptico publico census non est*, does not mean that a truly freeman (*bene ingenuus*) is one whose name does not appear in a tax register, but only that somebody who wants to be a cleric must be both of free birth, and not registered as a tax payer (otherwise Wickham 2005, p. 112, n. 142 and others). There could be a suggestion that free born Franks might enjoy a special *status* in the will of Willibrod, who left to the abbey of Echternach *omnen rem vel villam seu mancipia, quae mihi ingenui Franci pro amore eorum et salute tradident* (Pardessus II, n. 540, p. 349). But the will probably only alludes to the fact that only free-born Franks have free disposal of their property. Ibidem, pp. 280 n. 474,

any kind is claimed, or granted, it is on the basis of a royal order, not because of ethnicity. It seems to me that if Franks, simply as free-born Franks, had really enjoyed immunity from the tax this must have left traces in the laws and legal documents. There remains the question why some Franks could claim that they ought in justice and fairness not receive tax-demands.

I would suggest that the belief of some Frank's that they ought not to be asked to pay tax, was based on the way they had received their estates. The estates of the Frankish nobility that we know about only because they ended up in the possession of the Church and figure in surviving charters, are crowded around Paris in the Isle de France. Many of these people had received the estates already from Clovis or his immediate successors when they were laying the foundations of the kingdom, and the estates were evidently derived from royal property.³⁹ We do not know how exactly Clovis assembled the land he was going to give to his followers. We don't hear that Clovis followed up his military victory by large-scale confiscation of Roman estates, although surely there must have been quite a lot of that. It has been suggested that he simply took over property which had previously belonged to the *res privata* of the emperor, and as such had not been listed in the tax registers.⁴⁰ It is also quite likely that after several decades of war and disorder there was a fair amount of abandoned land. Whatever the origin of the estates at his disposal, I would suggest that when Clovis rewarded his followers with estates, he did not have the land inscribed in tax registers, so that the owners did not become subject to land-tax. Most of the men—though not all—rewarded in this way would have been Franks and their descendants might well have resented any attempts by successors of Clovis to demand tax from them.

I would suggest that Clovis' practice set a precedent, with the consequence that his successors too granted land without making it subject to land tax. This would explain why references to the land tax fade out in the course of the Merovingian period, and why the land tax is so rarely explicitly included in grants of immunity.⁴¹ It would also explain why Merovingian charters confirming gifts or transfers of property rarely, or even never, include a sentence touching on how the change of ownership will affect responsibility for tax

289 n. 481, 293 n. 485 all state that Franks have this right, without explicitly requiring free-birth, but perhaps these grantees could take free-birth for granted.

39 This seems to be accepted, see Wickham 2005, pp. 398–404; Bergengruen 1958, pp. 102–104.

40 Wickham 2005, p. 403, thinks that some of the land may have been imperial property, Bergengruen 1958, pp. 86–88, argues against this.

41 See below.

payments, something which Roman deeds of gift or sale often, but not always do.⁴² But the charters conferring immunity invariably mention a wide range of tolls and customs.⁴³ This would be because when kings gave away royal land without imposing the land tax, they invariably maintained their right to customs duties.

Taxation Loses the Moral High-Ground

One thing is very clear: the attitude to taxation had fundamentally changed. Taxation is never popular. But in some societies—in ours as in the Roman—it is seen as inevitable. Society such as it is cannot exist without it. So nothing is certain in this life except death and taxes. It was no longer so in Merovingian Gaul. Taxes came to be seen as an expression of greed on the part of the king. Greed is of course a sin, an offence against God. So taxes and above all any increase in the taxes could be seen as offensive to God. Even kings could be persuaded that if they raised taxes they would be offending God. Taxes were not abandoned under the Franks, but they became negotiable.

As one would expect, pressure was exerted by landowners on the king to obtain exemption from taxation. Almost all our evidence concerns the efforts of bishops on behalf of their church or on behalf of the city in which their church was situated. For instance Theudebert, who died in 548, remitted all tribute to the churches of Clermont Ferrand.⁴⁴ Chlotar I who died in 561 proposed that all churches in his kingdom should pay one third of their revenue to the crown. The united Gallic bishops induced Chlotar to withdraw his order.⁴⁵ The bishops of Tours successfully asserted the immunity of their city when it was successively challenged under kings Chlotar I, Charibert, and Childbert II. Gregory of Tours faced a challenge to the immunity of Tours, when a tax inspector who had revised the tax register of Poitiers at the request of the local bishop, arrived at Tours in order to perform the same task there. Gregory protested to the king and the immunity of Tours was confirmed once more, out of respect for St Martin, the patron saint of the city.⁴⁶ We do not know how

42 Roman deeds of gift or sale with reference to tax: Kraemer 1958, ns. 23.6, 24.10, 30.9; Tjäder 1959, p. 288 ns. 10–11, II. 5–6; 292, n. 20.d IV.10–11; vol. 2, 1982, p. 76, n. 32.11; p.76, n. 32.11. *Liberæ ob omni nexu fisci*: vol. 2 n. 30.53; n. 31.6; n. 36.20; n. 37.43; n. 38.41.

43 Cfr. *carrale, navigale, pontaticum, portaticum, pulviraticum*, see also n. 61 below, *rodacum, salutaticum, cispeticum*. Though these terms are Latin, they were not taken over, as far as I know, from the Roman system.

44 Gregory of Tours, *HF* III, 25.

45 Ibidem IV, 2.

46 Ibidem IX, 80.

many cities achieved grants of immunity at the request of their bishop.⁴⁷ The number may well have been considerable. However these concession were not secure. Tours received exemption from taxes once more, and this time for good, from the good king Dagobert (623–31), and it seems that the church received the tax which the king gave up.⁴⁸ It looks as if these grants of immunity ended with the death of the king who had granted them, and had to be renewed by his successor, but they often were.⁴⁹

Protest against taxation was not a monopoly of bishops. In 579 King Chilperic, exacted a new tax on vineyards, and on workmen. Was this an imitation of the Visigothic taxes in Hispania? This caused great discontent. A great many peasants fled from their land, and at Limoges there was a riot: the tax-demands were burnt and the tax-collector barely escaped with his life.⁵⁰ In the opinion of Chilperic's queen the raising of these taxes meant that the king intended to enrich himself at the expense of widows and orphans. The new tax was therefore an offence against God. She persuaded her husband that this was so. When their two sons fell gravely ill the taxes were withdrawn. The children died nevertheless.⁵¹ The taxing authority had lost the moral high ground. The remission of taxes was an act pleasing to God.⁵² From texts of the seventh century it appears that taxpayers would not tolerate the raising of taxes.⁵³ It is taken for granted that imposition of tribute is an act of oppression.⁵⁴

47 Bourges received immunity from Chlovis II (AD 640), *Vita Sulpicii*, *MGH SRM* IV, 6–7; Limoges in AD 632, *Vita Eligii* 1, 15.

48 *Vita Eligii*, 32 (*MGH, SRM* IV, 668): *omnem censum quod regi solvebatur integrum Dagobertus rex eidem ecclesiae indulsit atque per cartam confirmavit.*

49 Eg. *Praeceptio Chlotarii*, II, 12 (c. 614?): *quaecumque ecclesiae vel clericis aut quibuslibet personis a gloriosae memoriae praefatis principibus manifestantiae largitate conlata sunt, omni firmitate perdurent* (Chilperic I AD 561–584, Chlotar I AD 511–61).

50 Gregory of Tours, *HF* V, 28.

51 *Ibidem* V, 34.

52 So also in Visigothic *Hispania*: the edict of Ervig, *L.v.* ed. Zeumer p. 479.17: *votivum igitur omnipotenti deo meo cordis sacrificium deliberare praeoptans ... decretum ... prorogamus ... quidquid tributi ... vobis ... esse concessum.*

53 *MGH SRM* III, 593–594; 375–377; 200–202; Fredegar 4, 27, 60. The edict of Chlotar II, 8 (614) orders that public protest against new taxation must be taken into account: *ut ubicumque census novus impie additus est, et a populo reclamatur, iuxta inquaesitione misericorditer emendetur.*

54 Strict collection of taxes is wicked: *Vita Aridii* (*MGH, SRM* III, 593–594; *Vita Sulpicii* 6 (*MGH, SRM* III, 375–377); *Miracula S. Austrigiseli*, *ibidem* 200–202); Fredegar IV, 27 (*MGH, SRM* II, 131), IV, 60 (*ibidem* 151). Fredegar IV, 24 (*ibidem* 130): to be sent to review a tax register (*fiscum inquerendum*) was a dangerous mission, cfr. Lot 1928, pp. 94–107; Kaiser 1979, pp. 1–18.

The narrative of Gregory of Tours therefore leaves no doubt that already the early Merovingian kings did give generous grants of exemption from taxation to favoured *civitates*, though we have no idea of the number of these grants of immunity, and hence are unable to estimate the loss to the royal exchequer. It was however agreed at the time that gifts to the church were reducing the royal income.⁵⁵ If one also accepts the view argued earlier that Clovis and his successors had rewarded officials and followers by giving them estates that were not subject to taxation, it follows that while the tax system continued to function, the number of individuals subject to it was already getting steadily smaller.

Charters of Immunity

For the seventh⁵⁶ and early eight centuries we have documentary evidence in the form of charters granting immunities. The surviving charters all come from northern France most from north of the Seine, and therefore concern a different area from that which provided the bulk of the information of Gregory of Tours, and they all are addressed to ecclesiastical institutions.⁵⁷ From the absence of documentary evidence for secular grants, Fouracre concluded that grants of immunity were for practical purposes restricted to ecclesiastical lands.⁵⁸ But if, as I have argued, many Frankish grandees were from the start in possession of tax exempt land, they did not need further immunities. In any case our knowledge of Merovingian Gaul is largely derived from *Lives* of saints, and from documents almost exclusively derived from ecclesiastical archives.⁵⁹ So if charters of immunity were awarded to secular landowners they would almost certainly not have survived. In any case two of Marculf's *formulae* prove that immunities were in fact also granted to secular magnates.⁶⁰

But these documents granting immunity raise problems. *Immunitas* means 'exemption', but the word on its own does not define what kind of exemption

55 Gregory of Tours, *HF* VI, 46.

56 The earliest to survive is Pertz, *Diplomata* 15 of AD 635 = Kölzer 45 who considers it spurious. The earliest surviving charter considered genuine by Kölzer is Pertz 69, Kölzer 110 of 673. But the Edict of Chlothar II (584–629) confirms immunities granted to churches or clergy by his father, Chiperic I and his grandfather, Chlotar I (511–561).

57 The charters come mainly from monasteries with a concentration north of the Seine in the neighbourhood of Paris, see the map in Wood 1994, pp. 370–371.

58 Fouracre 1995, pp. 53–81.

59 One asks the question whether this is because secular lord's did not have archives, or more likely, because ecclesiastical archives had a much better chance of surviving. One might also ask why there are no charters of this kind, whether ecclesiastical or secular, preserved from the vast territories south of the Loire.

60 *Marculfi Formulae* I, 14; I, 17.

is being granted. In Roman legal texts, and still in the writings of Gregory of Tours, 'immunity' always represents immunity from exactions of some kind or other.⁶¹ In the Merovingian royal charters conferring 'immunity' on monasteries or churches the significance of the privilege is usually defined as meaning that officials of the king will not be allowed to enter the property of the immunity-holder. As a result they will not, in fact cannot, be involved in the hearing of law suits. They cannot collect the royal share of compositions, make requisitions, demand shelter or sustenance for government officials, demand sureties, or collect tolls.⁶² The purpose of the exclusion of the officials is always that the monastery should benefit financially from the activities from which the royal official is excluded, and from the levies which the officials are not allowed to exact. The purpose of the immunity is usually stated: it is to help the Church meet its expenses. The usual phrase is '*in luminaribus*'. But this should not, I think, be understood to mean that the resources gained are to be expended only on lighting.⁶³ The words *luminare* or *luminaria* refer to a treasury, which may originally have been created to pay for candles, but had become an all purpose treasury,⁶⁴ which no doubt still financed lighting, but was also drawn on for more general expenses.⁶⁵ The result and indeed the purpose of charters of immunity therefore was to transfer income from the king to the immunist.⁶⁶ It is not clear whether the sources of income covered by a grant of immunity were standardised or whether they differed from grant to grant, so that some immunists were more privileged than others. The latter alternative is more probable. Certainly some charters mentioned sources of income not mentioned in others.⁶⁷

Did immunity include exemption from the land tax? Some of the charters suggest that the dues which the *fiscus* is handing to the church or monastery are being levied on persons rather than on land. So the phrase *quid quid fiscus aut de ingenuis aut de servientibus aut in eorum agris commanentibus vel undecumque poterat sperare* seems to describe dues exacted from individuals working on the estate, in the service of the estate, rather than the tax liability of the

61 Especially *sordida munera*: CT 11, 16, 15; 17, 22.

62 *Marculfi Formulae* 1, 3.

63 I differ here from Fouracre 1995.

64 Du Cange 1840–1850, 4, 159 *sv luminare, luminaria*.

65 See Pertz n. 86 = Kölzer 171, *unde lumenaria monachis ibidem consistentibus habere deberent de tulloneo de fossas annis singulis ipso monasterio concesserunt, hoc est oleo lib 10 millia, garo modios 30, pepere lib. 30 etc.* Oil was used for lighting but not *garum* and pepper!

66 *Marculfi formulae* 1, 3: *quidquid fiscus . . . potuerat sperare . . . ecclesiae . . . proficiat*.

67 Exemptions mentioned in some charters include *heribannus*, *stophas* (28), *pontaticum* (bridge tolls), *pulveratikum* (labour dues), *cispeticum* (levy for road maintenance) (51).

estate as a whole. A grant of immunity defined in this way did not therefore necessarily include exemption from the land-tax.⁶⁸

On the other hand several of the documents are phrased so widely that their terms seem to confirm exemption from every possible exaction. So for instance Pertz 56 = Kölzer 130: *Nec ullas quaslibet redistributiones exactate*, or Pertz 28 *sed quantumcumque ad partem fisci nostri reddere debuerant ipse pontifex suaque ecclesia valeat habere concessum*, or Pertz 31 = Kölzer 99: *remotis et resecatis omnibus petitionibus fisci*. Some charters include exemption from unspecified *redhibitiones* (variously spelt).⁶⁹ But even these do not refer to the land tax explicitly. But I think that it is a reasonable assumption that if the king issuing the charter wanted it to be understood that the land tax was excluded from what would seem to be all embracing grant of immunity, he would have had to make it explicit that the land tax was not included in the grant. However, with very few exceptions which will be discussed later, charters of immunity do not mention the land-tax at all, while the exceptions themselves seem to me to prove the rule,⁷⁰ namely that institutions and individuals in receipt of a charter of immunity normally did not have to pay the tax. The *praeceptio* of Chlotar II (584–628),⁷¹ which seems to refer to the same kind of grant as the charters conferring immunity, confirms that collection of land tax, that is of public levies described as *agraria, pascuaria, vel decimas porcorum* was, or at least could be, included, in such a grant.⁷² The purpose of this paragraph of the law is to confirm all immunities granted by Chlotar's predecessors.

68 Pertz 28.43, cfr. Pertz 35.41–42. The phrases suggest a *capitation*, a head tax on workers of the land, cfr. n. 30 above.

69 See Pertz 55 = Kölzer 128: *causas audiendum, fideiussores tollendum, freda exigendum, mansiones faciendum, rotaticum extorquendum, nec ullas paratas aut quaslibet redistributiones exactare praesumat*, also Pertz 15 = Kölzer 49 (spurious), Pertz 24 = Kölzer 46 (spurious), Pertz 38 = Kölzer 96, Pertz 51 = Kölzer 123 (spurious), Pertz 58 = Kölzer 134, Pertz 86 = Kölzer 134.

70 For these relatively late exceptions see below.

71 *Praeceptio Chlotarii II*, 11: *agraria, pascuaria, vel decimas porcorum ecclesiae pro fidei nostrae devotione concedemus, ita ut actor aut decimator in rebus ecclesiae nullus accedat. Ecclesiae, vel clericis nullam requirant agentes publici functionem qui avi vel genitoris nostri immunitatem meruerunt*.

72 *Ibidem*, *nullus accedat* suggests that this law is concerned with what are elsewhere described as grants of immunity. The *praeceptio* does not by itself make it clear whether the exclusion of officials means that the church will collect the revenues on behalf of the state, or for its own use. But since the purpose of immunities was to subsidise the immunity holder financially, the second alternative is much more likely.

To sum up: if at the request of a bishop like Gregory of Tours kings sometimes granted immunity from taxation to whole *civitates*, and if they regularly granted lands to followers without requiring them to pay land tax on it, and if they also from time to time granted immunity from taxation to monasteries, churches, and probably also secular landowners who had previously been listed on tax registers, it would follow that the number of estates benefiting from grants of immunity was large and growing, and that the number of properties liable to the tax would be steadily reduced. This is confirmed by the ruling of the council of Clichy of 626–7,⁷³ which lays down that individuals listed in a tax register are not eligible to join the clergy. For this regulation assumes that a significant numbers of individuals sufficiently respectable to be potential clerics, which in those days meant owners of a certain amount of land, were by then no longer registered as tax-payers.⁷⁴

Later 7th Century and After

Nevertheless the actual end of the land-tax remains somewhat obscure. A land tax⁷⁵ is still mentioned in some sources in the first half of the eighth century, but usually the context is that the income is being renounced or directed towards an ecclesiastical institution.⁷⁶ In 633 Tours once more, and this time it seems finally, obtained tax exemption from Dagobert 1 (623–39). In c. 720 bishop Ibbo of Tours cited the royal immunity granted to the city of Tours as a precedent for excusing the monastery of St Martin numerous payments it had previously been obliged to make to the bishop. These seem to include payments which once had been made to the royal *fiscus*, but had been renounced in favour of the Church.⁷⁷ Eligius, bishop of Limoges obtained tax exemption

73 *Formulae Marculfi* 1, 19 (of c. 700) maintains this ruling.

74 Even if property was sometimes recovered by confiscation from rebels, I cannot see how such habitual generosity can have failed to weaken the resources of the monarchy in the long run.

75 Note that the tax now usually involves an institution being liable to pay a lump sum or its equivalent in kind, not an amount assessed on the size of its holdings. If this is the old Roman land tax there has been very considerable simplification.

76 See below, notes 85–86, 88, 100, 101.

77 Pardessus n. 512, pp. 319–322, on p. 320: *cessos volumus ecclesiae census, servitutes, opera, mansiones, pastus, munera, freda (fisco episcopo, iudicibus missis et archidiacono), et omnes consuetudines saeculares amputamus et resecamus*. The construction of the bracketed words is not clear to me.

for his *civitas* in 638,⁷⁸ in 640 the bishop Sulpicius obtained lasting immunity from taxes for his *civitas* of Bourges.⁷⁹

A charter from Theuderic 3 (673–691), confirmed by Childebert 3 (694–711), in favour of the monastery of St Sergius at Angers, gives the beneficiary immunity, but only in return for a fixed annual payment to the royal *fiscus*.⁸⁰ Kölzer argues that the immunity merely mean that the abbey obtained the right to collect its tax itself instead of having it collected by royal collectors. But I can see no evidence for that. The abbey is granted immunity from the tax in return for a small lump-sum payment.

The Church of Le Mans owned an estate at Ardin in Poitou. The estate was granted immunity which was to benefit the monastery of St Gervasius at Le Mans in 6 charters between 669/70 and 743, of which at least the two earliest do not specify the land tax,⁸¹ but in a confirmation of 698 *census* and *lucrum terrenum* are explicitly included.⁸² A charter of AD 721 or 722 describes how the *inferenda* of Ardin, totalling 400 *solidi*, have been collected by the *iuniores* of the bishop of Le Mans for the benefit of the monastery of St Gervasius.⁸³ There is no suggestion that any of this is owed to the king.⁸⁴ But the bishop himself, at least at this time, had a tax liability. For in a charter of 712 the bishop of Le Mans was granted immunity for all estates including monasteries subject to himself, but he remained liable to pay to the royal *fiscus* an annual fixed sum of 400 *solidi*, derived from his villages, farms, churches and monasteries.⁸⁵ In 716 the bishop was ordered to pay annually 200 *solidi* from the *pagus Cenomanus*

78 *Vita Eligii* 1, 15 (*MGH SRM* IV, 681) The tax had been collected in gold, which was smelted and purified by a *monetarius*, before being sent to the king. This procedure looks very Roman. The tax seems to have been a head tax, see *Miracula Austregisili* 2, (*MGH SRM* IV, 200–201): *quod unusquisque secundum suam personam persoveret*.

79 *Vita Sulpicii* 6 (*MGH SRM* IV, 375–736): *populus ille ab ipsa afflictione relevata usque in hodiernam diem in pristina libertate permanet*.

80 Kölzer 145 = Pertz 74 of Childeric 3 (694–511) confirms charter of Theuderic 3 granting immunity to the monastery of St Sergius at Angers, but requiring the abbot to pay 12 *solidi* (6 *referendales*, and 6 *de remissaria auri pagensis*) to the royal *fiscus*.

81 Pertz 67 = Kölzer 107 (AD 669–70) (spurious?), Pertz 69 = Kölzer 110 (AD 673), neither mentions *inferenda*.

82 Pertz 80 = Kölzer 151 (ad 698); so also Pertz 85 = Kölzer 164 (AD 713).

83 Busson, Ledrus, *Actus*, 241. The collected tax is once described as *annocia* (= *annona*?).

84 Wickham 2005, p. 109: “it was apparently sent on to the king”. I see no evidence of this.

85 Pertz 87 = Kölzer 163. The levy was made up of 200 *solidi inferendales* and 200 *solidi auri pagensis*. The significance of this distinction is not clear. It does not go back to the Roman system.

to the monastery of St Denis.⁸⁶ Presumably he continued to pay the remaining 200 *solidi* to the king. We do not know for how long.

We have three charters giving immunity to another monastery in the diocese of Le Mans, the monastery of St Calais (Anisola), between the years 693 and 711–715. None of these explicitly includes *inferenda* or any other exactions that might represent the old Roman tax.⁸⁷ But when Pippin, the Carolingian, in 760 once more confirmed the immunity of St Calais, *inferenda* were explicitly included.⁸⁸

All the latest reference to a land tax and to its remission in favour of an ecclesiastical institution come from the valley of the Loire and neighbouring territories.⁸⁹ We have no explicit references to the tax being collected, or indeed for exemptions from tax being granted, as late as this from anywhere elsewhere in Gaul, whether north or south.⁹⁰ From this Wickham has concluded that the government in the early 8th century still received tax from some estates and *civitates*, in the Loire region, but no longer from elsewhere.⁹¹ But the lack of evidence about the land-tax in other parts of Gaul may simply be due to the fact that we are altogether very much less well informed about them than about central and north western Gaul. However the evidence from the Loire too comes to an end in the second half of the 8th century.

The Carolingian period has produced a number of so-called polyptychs,⁹² documents listing the dues demanded by certain great ecclesiastical landlords from their tenants. The levies mentioned in these documents look very much

86 Kölzer 168: *vaccas cento soldaris*. Was this an *adaeratio* of the 100 *vaccas inferendales* from the *ducatu Cenomannico* which Dagobert is said to have remitted, see *Gesta Dagoberti* 1.37 (*MGH SRM* II, 415)? For the rate of exchange, 1 *vacca* = 2 *solidi*, see *MGH Capitularia* 2, 17.15, cited below n. 101. *Vaccas ferendales* had also been imposed by the Franks on some defeated Saxons, and these too were remitted by the good king Dagobert, Fredegard 4.74 (*MGH SRM* II, 415).

87 Probably a royal foundation. See Wood 1994, 184 on spurious Pertz 2 = Kölzer 7. The charters: Kölzer 146 (649–711), Kölzer 140 = Pertz 63 (693), Kölzer 160 = Pertz 80 (711–15). According to the spurious Kölzer 193 = Pertz 94 (743–51), the monastery paid an annual rent in kind, including 4lbs. of wax “*ad lumen ecclesiae*” to the bishop of Le Mans, see also *Actus* 248–52 dated 752.

88 *Dip. Pip.* 14 (*MGH Diplomata Karolingorum*, 1, 19–20).

89 Eg. Tours, Angers, Bourges, Le Mans, Ardin (in Poitou).

90 Wickham 2005, pp. 109–111.

91 It is however possible that the *inferenda*, which are not specified on the older immunities, were an innovation of the late 7th century—a modification of the previous immunity.

92 Fossier 1978. On the evolution of this class of document from Roman documents see Goffart 1982 = 1989, pp. 233–253. Gasnault 1975. See also *Lex Bavariorum* 1, 3 (*MGH, Leges* 5, 1, translated in Rivers 1977).

like levies set out in Roman tax-documents.⁹³ It looks as if the income of the various different levies has been transferred from the state to the landlord. Administratively this would be easy to arrange, in fact it would often have been an automatic consequence of a grant of immunity. For under the Late Empire many of the great landlords had received the privilege of collecting the taxes of their tenants themselves, rather than having these taxes collected by *curiales*, or other regular tax-collectors. Goffart thinks that the decisive change took place between the death of Gregory of Tours (694) and that of king Dagobert (639). But probably there was no single decisive moment. The process was gradual, and not all in the same direction. The fact that so much of our evidence is concerned with confirmation by kings of immunities granted by their predecessors is itself evidence that enjoyment of immunities was precarious, even of immunities that had been enjoyed for a long time.⁹⁴

It will be noted that the conclusion that the royal government renounced its income from general taxation is to a considerable part based on a negative, the fact that the land tax is mentioned explicitly in neither the majority of the charters conferring immunity, nor in charters confirming gifts of land, nor in the polyptychs. Some have argued that the tax is not mentioned because its continued collection on behalf of the royal *fiscus* is taken for granted.⁹⁵ But most scholars do not think that this is the right explanation. Fustel de Coulanges thought that there are no references to the land-tax in the polyptychs because it was no longer collected.⁹⁶ Goffart more recently argued that the land-tax is not mentioned because it had become less important than the assorted sources of revenue that are mentioned.⁹⁷ In either case the royal government would appear to have reigned itself to the loss of this particular source of income, though it continued to draw revenue from tolls and market charges, from ownerless lands, and from a share of compositions settled in court.⁹⁸

If we look back over the evidence bearing on the later history of the Roman land tax in Gaul, we must admit that it is not conclusive. The most generally

93 In Rouche 1979, pp. 467–70, the fragment of a polyptych of the monastery of St Pierre le Vif de Sens, listing dues from farms in Auvergne and the region of Limoges.

94 Fredegardi continuator *MGH SRM* II, 641: Waifre king of Aquitaine (745–768) tries to restore tax on estates belong to bishops in the northern kingdom of Pippin I, which had not been collected for a long time.

95 Durliat 1990.

96 Fustel de Coulanges 1888–1892, p. 422.

97 Goffart 1972, pp. 373–394 = 1989, pp. 167–211, esp. pp. 190–211; also Idem 1982, pp. 3–21 = 1989, pp. 213–231.

98 Goffart 1989, 229–30.

accepted conclusion is that the tax disappeared gradually, grant by grant. As late as 795–96 Lewis the Pious remitted the people of Albi their tax in corn and wine,⁹⁹ and later still in 829, he restated his father's regulations for the *adaeratio of inferenda*.¹⁰⁰ But then the references cease, and it would seem that the taxing of land, its products, and its workers, had been abandoned altogether. This view is to a considerable extent based on the absence of positive evidence for survival of the tax. Generally speaking, conclusions drawn from mere lack of evidence are necessarily unsafe. In this particular case however they are strengthened by general considerations. It is certain that the Roman land—tax did come to an end. It certainly did not survive into the kingdoms of the high middle ages. The only question is when and how. There is no doubt that in the course of the Merovingian period, the number of persons liable to pay the tax was being greatly reduced. That the council of Clichy (626–627) could rule that men subject to tax should not be enrolled in the clergy, surely implies that taxpayers were becoming a minority among the classes from whom clergy were enrolled, just as the *curiales* came to be a minority among the landowners inhabiting their city. The shrinking of the number of taxpayers is what we would expect, because the generosity displayed by Merovingian kings shows that they did not consider it a priority to maintain the tax system intact. Generation after generation they were quite ready to grant exemptions from taxation to individual *ciuitates* or landowners, and especially to churches and monasteries. It is clear why they were so generous, and why they could afford such generosity. It does look as if at least some Franks had from the start been exempted from taxes, or at least had enjoyed considerable tax privileges.¹⁰¹ In time the differences between Franks and Romans faded away, and as the inhabitants of most of Gaul¹⁰² became Franks they will have expected the privileges of Franks. Unlike the Roman emperors the Merovingian kings did not have to pay an army, or to maintain a large paid civil service. On the other hand kings had strong reasons both of piety and of politics to strengthen Church, and also to maintain good relations with the magnates that

99 Astronomus, *Vita Hludovici* 7.

100 *Hludovici Pii Capitularia* n. 192.15 (*MGH Capitularia* 2, 17): *Quicumque vicarii vel alii ministri comitum tributum, quod inferenda vocatur, maioris pretii a populo exigere praesumpsit, quam a missis bonae memoriae genitoris nostril constitution fuit, hoc est duos solidos pro una vacca...*

101 See above.

102 The inhabitants of Aquitaine remained 'Romans', but there too the land-tax seems to have faded out, see Rouche 1979, pp. 342–350.

gathered at their court. Both Church and magnates could be accommodated by tax concessions. Even though the Merovingians adopted many features of the Roman administration their system of government was fundamentally different.¹⁰³ That is why the Merovingian kings could afford to give away their income from general taxation, while retaining and perhaps creating a large number of tolls and related exactions.

Chris Wickham divides ancient states into two classes: states based on taxation and states based on landowning.¹⁰⁴ The later empire was a state which depended on taxation, the Merovingian kingdom was based on landownership. Should we describe the development of a state based on a paid army and paid bureaucracy into a state which functioned without either as a process of natural evolution? I think it is pretty clear that this transformation would not have happened if the Roman System had not been damaged beyond recovery by the pressure of the northern barbarians. But what was the contribution of the northerners? In spite of the relative weakness of its central government, and the fact that on the death of a king the kingdom was regularly divided between all his sons, the Merovingian kingdom was remarkably stable, it remained basically a single community, which it still is—the modern France. It was held together, not totally, but to a considerable extent by the cohesion of its magnates, and their lasting loyalty to the Merovingian house. Where the cohesion of the Roman state had been based on public obligation and paid service, the Merovingian kingdom depended on relationships of personal dependence, fortified by grants of land. Various factors which made for the cohesion of an aristocracy scattered over a huge territory can be suggested. Wickham stresses the fact that the estates of the great land owners were not concentrated in a single block, but scattered over different regions of Gaul.¹⁰⁵ But I can't help thinking that shared Frankishness, the Frankish identity and the shared customs that fortified it, played an important role. After all people that had identified as Romans now came to identify as Franks, as they have done ever since.

103 Wickham 2005, pp. 120–124 on the distinction between states based on taxation and states based on land-owning.

104 Wickham 2005, pp. 199–200.

105 Wickham 2005, pp. 199–200.

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Violence in the Barbarian Successor Kingdoms*

Gregory of Tours' *History of the Franks*, completed after 591 CE, is by far the most detailed account of life in a successor kingdom of the Roman Empire and, judging by this account, life in Frankish Gaul was very violent indeed. The *Chronicle* of Fredegar, mid-seventh century, leaves the same impression. From these two sources it has been concluded that life in Frankish Gaul was a "free for all," in which the uncontrolled passions of barbarians had free rein and life was nasty, brutal, and short. To cite Dill: "The Roman peace which gave the world almost unexampled calm and prosperity has vanished . . . passion greed and bold disregard of moral tradition have followed great wars and triumphs of military strength. . . . The long tranquility of the Roman sway ended in the violence and darkness of the Middle Ages."¹

But more recent scholarship suggests that this conclusion is wrong or at least much too simple. For a very different picture is provided by some twenty-four documents, the so-called *placita*, which record the settlement of land disputes in the court of the Frankish king. These documents reveal that there existed well established judicial machinery for settling disputes without resort to force, based on detailed and pedantic procedures, laid down in manuals of formulae.² This judicial machinery used written documents and required the survival of considerable Roman legal culture.³ The judicial rules were sanctioned not only by the power of the king but also by that of the magnates of the land, in whose interest it was that there should be functioning institutions, where land disputes could be settled peacefully. The procedure was therefore based on consensus. This meant that it could not easily be changed, even by royal edict. But it also meant that the courts could function even under a weak ruler.⁴

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1 S. Dill, *Roman Society in Gaul in the Merovingian Age* (London, 1926) 306–7.

2 K. Zeumer (ed.), *Formulae merovingici et karolini aevi*, *MGH leges* 5 (Hannover, 1886).

3 P. Wormald, "The *leges barbarorum*," in H.-W. Goetz, J. Jarnut, and W. Pohl (eds), *Regna and Gentes* (Leiden, 2003) 21–53, especially 42–4.

4 P. Fouracre, "Attitudes to violence in seventh- and eighth-century Francia," in G. Halsall (ed.), *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West* (Woodbridge, 1998) 60–75; P. Fouracre, "Placita

Comparable developments are documented in the Lombard kingdom.⁵ There too we seem to have a conflict between the literary sources and the documentary evidence. For Visigothic Spain the conflict of evidence is less strong but perhaps only because we have practically no Visigothic documents and only very scanty literary evidence, certainly no narrative history remotely comparable to Gregory of Tours' *History of the Franks*. That Roman administrative and legal traditions continued to exercise a greater influence in Visigothic Spain than in the other *regna* is shown by the royal Code, modelled on that of Justinian. These laws also show that the Visigothic kings struggled to assert a Roman concept of royal power against the self-assertion of the powerful and armed nobility.⁶

Faced with the need to reconcile seemingly contradictory evidence, scholars currently argue that it is not useful to discuss whether one society was more violent than another or, more specifically, whether the society of the *regna* was more violent than the society of the Empire.⁷ So Fouracre writes, "We can neither tell whether Merovingian society was becoming more or less violent, nor say whether it was more or less violent than any other early medieval society. What can be done is to comment on specific instances of violence in relation to the sources of information about conflict and its resolution."⁸

No longer content simply to register, and perhaps condemn, violent acts, scholars now define situations in which violence is employed with a view to establishing the functions of different patterns of violent behavior in different societies.⁹ So it has been shown that in Merovingian Gaul, and in Lombard Italy, violence, or the threat of violence, paradoxically played a positive part in bringing disputes before the courts and thus helped to maintain social relations which were on the whole quite peaceful and orderly. The tendency has therefore been to stress the peaceful and not the violent aspects of dispute settlement in Merovingian society.

and the settlement of disputes in later Merovingian Francia," in W. Davies and P. Fouracre (eds), *The Settlement of Disputes in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1986) 23–43.

- 5 C. Brühl, *Studien zu den langobardischen Königsurkunden* (Tübingen, 1971); C. Wickham, "Land Disputes and their Social Framework," in Davies and Fouracre, *The Settlement of Disputes*, 105–24: 150 court cases.
- 6 L.A. Garcia Moreno, "Legitimate and illegitimate violence in Visigothic law," in Halsall, *Violence and Society*, 46–59.
- 7 G. Halsall, "Violence and society: an introductory survey," in Halsall, *Violence and Society*, 1–45.
- 8 P. Fouracre, "Attitudes to violence," *op. cit.* (n. 4) 60–1.
- 9 Legitimate and illegitimate violence, public and private violence, perceived violence, violence as a call for help, ritual violence etc.

But it seems to me that by focusing on evidence for the non-violent settlement of disputes, scholars ignore a feature of Germanic society which marks a significant change from Roman society and needs to be recognized as such. This is the fact that in the laws of all the *regna* injuries inflicted by one person on another, such as murder, assault, or robbery, had to be settled by compensation paid by the injuring party to the injured party or by the kin of the perpetrator to the kin of the injured.¹⁰ The injury was treated as an offense against the injured and his kin, and it was left to the injured and /or his kin, not to the community, to compel the person who had caused the injury to give compensation for the damage he had inflicted. Unless the perpetrator or his kin paid compensation, it was the duty of the victim or his kin to take vengeance on the perpetrator or his kin. But the use of force by the injured party quite was likely to start a chain of retaliation, in fact a feud.

This approach to social conflict is implied in the laws of the Lombards, the Burgundians, the Franks, and up to a point of the Visigoths. So the community did not abolish self-help by the injured, but provided institutions which could make self-help unnecessary or at least put an end to a feud. The kings established courts at various levels to arbitrate conflicts and listed an extraordinary number and variety of potential injuries, together with the compensation that a court would award if a particular injury were proved.¹¹ But it remained possible that the guilty party would not agree to pay compensation or indeed that the case would not be brought before the court at all. Retaliation by the aggrieved remained the alternative to settlement in court. This follows most clearly from a number of Lombard laws.¹² Rothair 164 lays down how a nephew accused of illegitimacy can prove that he is legitimate and save his inheritance "for it would be grave and unjust that such a case should be settled by a duel between the two men."¹³ The same phrase occurs in a law for settling a dispute over the guardianship over another man's wife, and also in a law concerning a husband suspected of killing his wife.¹⁴ If a free girl or woman voluntarily has intercourse with a freeman her relatives have the right to take vengeance, but judgment by the king is offered as an alternative.¹⁵ If an animal belonging to

10 Wormald, "*Leges barbarorum*," 29–30; *ibid.*, 47–53 reproduces compensation tariffs of the various codes.

11 E.g. *Pactus legis Salicae* 41: "Concerning homicide of freemen."

12 F. Blume (ed.), *Leges Langobardorum*, *MGH Leges nationum Germanicarum* 4 (Hannover, 1869) cited from the translation of K.F. Drew, *The Lombard Laws* (Philadelphia, 1973).

13 Drew, *The Lombard Laws*, 80: Rothair 164.

14 *Ibid.*, 80–1: Rothair 165 and 166.

15 *Ibid.*, 189.

some individual injures someone other than its owner, the owner shall pay for the killing or damage and the feud, that is the enmity, shall cease.¹⁶

The great majority of Lombard laws and all but very few of the Frankish ones only state the compensation to be paid for the injury without specifying what happened if compensation was refused. But that does not alter the implied principle that unless compensation was paid, the injured were entitled to retaliate. Thus it was the threat of retaliation by the injured that provided motivation for the perpetrator to accept the judgment of the court. For if compensation was refused, retaliation by the victim or his kin against the perpetrator or his kin remained the means of obtaining redress, and threat of retaliation remained the strongest incentive to use the courts.

In Roman law violence against individuals was treated as an offense that concerned the community. It was open to every citizen to launch a prosecution.¹⁷ The state provided the courts that established whether an injury had been inflicted, decided the punishment, and inflicted it. Moreover the imperial mandate to provincial governors stated, "The man in charge of a province must see to it that he clears the province of criminals."¹⁸ Ulpian explains this as meaning:

It is the duty of the...governor to see that the province he rules is peaceful.... This he will achieve if he takes careful measures that the province is free from criminals and searches them out. He should search out persons guilty of sacrilege, brigands, kidnappers, and thieves and punish them according to their offences, and he should also repress them that harbor them.¹⁹

The arrest of the accused was the duty of the local police officer, the *eiren-arch*, who would present the prisoner for trial before the Roman governor.²⁰ But much prosecution of crime depended on private individuals launching an accusation in court. The informer must get permission from the governor to make a formal accusation.²¹ The governor would decide whether to imprison the accused, put him under guard in his own house, or allow him to give bail. If the accused did not appear, his property was sequestered. If he still did not

¹⁶ Ibid., 326.

¹⁷ Justinian, *Inst.* IV. 18.

¹⁸ *D* 1.18.

¹⁹ Ulpian, frgs 3; 13pr.

²⁰ *D* 48.3.6.

²¹ *D* 48.2.18.

appear, his property was confiscated.²² If the accuser failed to prosecute he was liable under the *Senatus consultum Turpilianum*. To sum up, the sanction against private violence in the Roman state was punishment by agents of the state, not of the victim. There was no occasion for retaliation because the public authorities had the institutions and the power to bring the accused to trial and to inflict the penalty. Moreover, under the Roman system a violent act concerned only the perpetrator and his victim. The kin would not be involved.

In practice the difference between levels of violence in Roman and Germanic society will have been less great than comparison of their respective legal principles would suggest. Germanic procedure was in a state of transformation. In all the codes, Lombard, Frankish, and Visigothic, we observe a development towards the compulsory use of the court and the eventual illegalization of the feud.²³ From time to time kings issued decrees giving them a more active part in the maintenance of law and order.²⁴ They organized the pursuit of thieves.²⁵ Childebert II (579–96 CE) forbade the taking of revenge for homicide and laid down a death penalty both for killing and for theft.²⁶ Kings also issued laws on sanctuary and consanguineous marriage.²⁷ They laid down detailed rules of court procedure.²⁸ One of the formulae of Marculf insists that no feud should follow once royal officials have intervened to exact penalties.²⁹ In practice, a feud might arise all the same, but without the intervention of the official a feud would have been inevitable, as is, for instance, implied in the provision of the edict of Chilperic that a *malus homo*, who could not offer compensation for himself and whom his kin would not redeem, may be handed over to his accusers.³⁰ The arrangements for settling disputes were evolving in the

22 D 48.17.

23 *Pactus legis Salicae*, K.A. Eckhardt (ed.), *MGH, Leges nationum germanicarum* 4.1 (Hannover 1962), here cited in the translation of T.J. Rivers, *Laws of the Riparian and Salian Franks* (Philadelphia, 1991).

24 See Wormald, "*Leges barbarorum*," op. cit. (n. 3) 39–40.

25 *Pactus legis Salicae* (*Pactus pro tenore pacis*), 80.83, 85–6, 89, 92, 116 (*Edictum Chilperici*); *Decretus Childeberti* 3.1, 4–5 (596 CE).

26 *Decretus Childeberti* 2.3, 5 (595 CE).

27 *Decretus Childeberti* 2.2; 1.2 (594 CE).

28 E.g. *Pactus legis Salicae* 46 and of course the formulae in Zeumer, *Formulae merovingicae* and the *placita* in G.H. Pertz, *Diplomata regum Francorum e stripe Merovingica*, *MGH, Diplomata Imperii* 1, Hannover 1872.

29 Form. Marculfi 1.32 (Zeumer, *Formulae merovingicae*, 62).

30 Bloodfeud is used rather loosely for feud (*faidus*) in J.M. Wallace Hadrill's excellent, "The bloodfeud of the Franks," *BRL* 41 (1958/59) 459–87; *Pactus legis Salicae* (*Edictus Chilperici*) 113.

direction of greater involvement by communal institutions and a greater influence of Roman law. The Lombard Code seems closest to the pure Germanic system. The Visigothic Code is the most Roman. The Frankish Codes fall in between. But the feud remained an accepted means of carrying on disputes among the aristocracy deep into the Middle Ages.³¹

When we try to assess the extent to which recourse to courts had replaced self-help, we are hindered by the lack of statistics. We have a respectable number of *placita*, but these originated within a limited period, 670–716 CE and they almost all refer to a particular kind of dispute, namely over the ownership of land, more specifically land claimed by the Church, in fact, in almost all cases by the abbey of St Denis.³² So while these documents provide conclusive evidence for the existence of a sophisticated system of judicial procedures, they cannot tell us how widely these procedures were used and how frequently and in what circumstances the procedures involving self-help continued to be employed.

Here the evidence of Gregory of Tour becomes essential. We see that the more peaceful view of Merovingian society appears to be inconsistent with the literary evidence. The revisionists, therefore, must in some way or another disqualify this evidence. Their case has been developed most fully by Goffart, who argues that Gregory was writing as a bishop and, therefore, had a motive for selecting incidents of violent behavior. Accordingly, he did not set out to write history in the modern academic sense of a narrative as true to what actually happened as its author could make it, but designed his work as satire, a vivid caricature which would demonstrate the inevitability of chaotic, immoral, and violent behavior on the part of individuals who made the pursuit of worldly advantage and well-being their principal aim in life.³³ Goffart's essay is a brilliant piece of literary criticism, which is not to be rejected out of hand. After all, Roman literature had a long tradition of satirical writing and there is an element of satire even in the historiography of Tacitus, the greatest Roman historian.³⁴ Besides, it is a fact known to all good journalists that violence makes good copy, and both Gregory and Fredegar were certainly very much concerned to make their narrative lively and exciting. But their evidence should not, therefore, be dismissed. A comparison of Pliny's Letters and Tacitus'

31 For the survival of the feud in the sense of "a state of enmity which makes certain types of violence legitimate," see S.D. White, "Feuding and peacemaking in Touraine around the year 1100," *Traditio* 42 (1986) 196–263.

32 Fouracre, "*Placita*," op. cit. (n. 4) 26.

33 W. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History* (Princeton, 1988) ch. 3.

34 This was taken up by Christian writers, e.g. Jerome. See D.S. Wiesen, *Jerome as a Satirist* (Ithaca, 1964).

Annals suggests that Tacitus' description of the Early Empire is distorted, as is Pliny's, though in the opposite direction. But this does not mean that the evidence of either Tacitus or of Pliny should be dismissed. While Tacitus' account is undoubtedly one-sided, almost everyone would agree that it shows us an important aspect of the Principate. The same is surely true of the writings of Gregory of Tours. There certainly is a *prima facie* case that Merovingian Gaul was a violent society in the sense that its institutions involved even the moderately propertied in both active and passive violence to a greater extent than in societies whose institutions restricted the use of force to the government. If this is precisely what Gregory of Tours and Fredegar suggest, their evidence should be taken seriously.

Gregory's *History* is full of examples of self-help.³⁵ After a cleric had seduced a woman her relatives pursued the two and captured them. They burnt the woman and accepted twenty *solidi* of compensation from the cleric.³⁶ After the son of a bishop had been denounced to the king, he together with his retainers attacked the house of the man who had denounced him and killed him.³⁷ The son of the bishop of Langres, who thought that Gregory of Tours' brother, Peter, had used magic to kill his father, killed Peter. In due course the killer of Peter was hacked limb from limb by the relatives of another victim.³⁸ Nanthimus, count of Angoulême, killed a presbyter and several laymen in order to avenge the death of his uncle, a former bishop of the city.³⁹ What these and other stories illustrate is the readiness of members of the elite of Merovingian Gaul to bypass the formal procedure of claiming compensation in court by taking vengeance into their own hands. Gregory related these incidents as if they were nothing out of the ordinary. The same impression is given by his accounts of the behavior of bishops, counts, and even kings when they had to deal with acts of personal vengeance committed in the course of a feud. Their response varied from case to case, but rarely or never did they treat personal vengeance as something which should never have happened, as a practice to be stamped out, and therefore meriting exemplary punishment. It was taken for granted

35 See, for instance, R.W. Mathisen, *Roman Aristocrats in Barbarian Gaul* (Austin, 1993) 139–43.

36 Gregory of Tours, *HF* 6.37 (570s CE).

37 *Ibid.*, 3.34–35.

38 *Ibid.*, 5.5.

39 *Ibid.*, 5.36.

that personal vengeance would be taken. Indeed that a life was taken in order to avenge an affront was accepted by the king as justifying the killing.⁴⁰

Gregory in fact bears witness to the prevalence of the mentality one would expect to find in a society whose law and order depended on the widespread readiness of individuals to take the law into their own hands. He reports that bishop Badgesilus of Le Mans used to brag, "I will not, therefore, just because I have been made a cleric cease to be an avenger of my injuries," and makes one Chramnesindus, who was involved in a lengthy feud of successive acts of revenge killing, say, "Unless I avenge the deaths of my relatives I deserve to lose the name of a man and to be called a helpless woman."⁴¹ What these citations show is that the speakers were concerned for their honour.⁴² In Merovingian society, honour affected not only a man's self-respect but also his standing in society and therefore his ability to protect family, dependents, and allies.⁴³ That the duty of revenge was rooted in a sense of the honour of individuals does not mean that vengeance was necessarily the most common manner of gaining redress. It is impossible to quantify the frequency of self-help. But it is safe to say that everybody knew that any act of wrong doing, particularly one involving killing or physical assault or indeed any behavior that might be considered an infringement of somebody's honour, might provoke violent retaliation on the part of the victim, his or her kin, or their allies. Indeed in a society that lacked an effective police force, knowledge of the likelihood of retaliation and perhaps of a lengthy feud provided the principal incentive for people to submit their grievances for settlement in court.⁴⁴

Gregory showed that self-help and court settlement coexisted and supplemented each other. This is clearly seen in the long feud involving a certain Sihar, on one side, and first Austregesil then later Chremnesind, on the other.⁴⁵

40 Ibid., 9.19: "the judgment was that he [Chremnesind] must prove that he had taken life in order to avenge an affront."

41 Ibid., 5.36 and 8.39. For this famous feud, see *ibid.*, 7.47, 9.19.

42 M. Inness, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages: The Middle Rhine Valley 400–1000* (Cambridge, 2000) 130: "The concern which demands the threat of inter-personal violence was the sense of honour," that is honour in the sense of the Old German *êre* rather than the Latin *honor*. See F. Zunkel s.v. "Ehre" in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* vol. 2 (Stuttgart, 1975) 1–68, especially 1–3.

43 P. Fouracre, "Carolingian Justice, the Rhetoric of Improvement and the Context of Abuse," *Settimane* 42 (1995) 771–803; R. le Jan, "Justice royal et pratiques sociales dans le royaume franc au IX^e siècle," *Settimane* 44 (1997) 47–86.

44 This is the central point of J.M. Wallace Hadrill, "Bloodfeud of the Franks." *op. cit.* (n. 30).

45 The same interdependence of self-help and submission to judgment is alluded to more briefly in numerous other stories. But the violence was usually more conspicuous,

Austregesil's men killed the servant of a priest, who was a friend of Sichar. Sichar thereupon armed himself and others to kill Austregesil but Austregesil proved too strong. Then Austregesil retaliated by killing four of Sichar's servants and stealing some of his money. Next the local tribunal of Tours summoned the two parties and heard their dispute. The tribunal decided that Austregesil was guilty of killing the servants and stealing the money. This is the last we hear of Austregesil. He probably paid the compensation and freed himself from the feud.⁴⁶ However, he did not restore the stolen goods, which subsequently appeared in the possession of one Auno. So Sichar turned against Auno, attacked his house, killed him, his brother, and his son, and took away all his mobile property, especially his cattle. But another son of Auno survived, called Chremnesind, who felt duty bound to avenge father, uncle, and brother. At this point Gregory himself, the bishop of the city where this was happening, fearing even more bloodshed, put his authority behind the court.

Gregory does not describe the composition of the civic court. Presumably it was the count of the city who presided over the court. At any rate Gregory joined his authority to that of the court to summon the two parties to appear. The court decided that Sichar must pay compensation. But the judges and especially Gregory were so anxious to stop the feud that they declared that if Sichar could not pay the whole compensation, the Church would pay half. Chremnesind rejected both the judgment and the church's offer. Soon after he burnt down Sichar's house, killed his slaves, and carried off all mobile goods and cattle. Now the court of Tours and the bishop summoned the parties again and pronounced a new judgment. By his assault on Sichar's house Chremnesind had forfeited half of the compensation the court had previously awarded him, but he was still entitled to the other half. After this had been paid by the Church of Tours, the feud was temporarily settled. But eventually Chremnesind did kill Sichar thereby once more putting himself in danger of retaliation, now from Sichar's kin and allies. So he fled to the royal court and appealed to king Childebert. The king only required him to prove that he did kill Sichar to avenge an affront. This Chremnesind was, of course, able to do and it seems that he would have got away with the killing if it had not been for the fact that Sichar had been under the personal protection of the queen, whose honor had been diminished by his murder. So Queen Brunhild ordered the confiscation of Chremnesind's land. But soon after he got the properties

because Gregory avoided the details of the legal procedure. That is the kind of detail that is provided in the *placita*.

46 Gregory did not explicitly say this, but he wrote that Sichar's subsequent resumption of violence did not take account of the judgment.

back, presumably because the king's judgment prevailed over that of the queen.⁴⁷ These arrangements for conciliating conflict did not result in chaos. They probably resulted, indeed it almost certainly did result, in a lot more fighting and bloodshed than we, or the Romans, would have found tolerable. Nevertheless it preserved a reasonably stable society in which conflicts were settled before they had done irreparable damage. The real point is that the early medieval states had arrangements for conciliating disputes and conflict, which were essentially different from those in our society, as also from those of the Roman state, from which ours are, after all, ultimately derived. Local authorities, whether count or bishop, did not have the coercive power to maintain law and order in the way a modern police force is expected to do. Even the kings could only assert their power intermittently. They were not in a position to monopolize legitimate violence and they did not try to do so. The king was rather a last resort and a royal initiative only happened when the local situation seemed to get totally out of hand. However, when the king intervened, he would do so impressively.⁴⁸ In these circumstances persons, who had a grievance or felt that their honour had been wounded, often tried to right it themselves, by whatever means they were able.

While a superficial reading of the descriptions of self-help in Gregory of Tours may suggest that recourse to violence was arbitrary and limited only by the balance of power of the parties, a closer study of Gregory's fuller narratives, like the story of Sichar and Chremnesind, as well as research into conflict resolution in similar but better documented societies, suggest that the degree of violence employed in a dispute was governed to a considerable extent by local custom and public opinion.⁴⁹ In these circumstances the role of the state or of its local representatives was not to police the observance of the laws, but to provide a tariff which could form the basis for conciliation. Using the tariff the disputants might well come to an agreement without the intervention of any court, or alternatively they might think it in their own interest or might be persuaded or even compelled by local public opinion to bring their dispute before a court, whether that of the bishop, the count, or the king. They would, more often than not perhaps, do this voluntarily or at least on the initiative

47 Gregory of Tours, *HF* VII.47; IX.19.

48 Innes, *State and Society*, op. cit. (n. 42) 135 notes that Carolingian legislation on the blood-feud does not outlaw the institution but provided for royal intervention if the two parties did not come to a settlement or the situation got out of hand.

49 This owes a great deal to Innes, *State and Society*, especially 129–39. On local settlements see W. Davies, "Peoples and places in dispute in Ninth Century Brittany," in Davies and Fouracre (eds), *The Settlement of Disputes*, 65–84.

of one of the parties. If a dispute dragged on or in some other way threatened the stability of society, the disputants might be summoned to a local court, as Austregesil and Sichar and later Sichar and Chremnesind were summoned to the court at Tours.⁵⁰ The court might not have had the force to compel attendance without physical support from the neighborhood or perhaps the threat, or the reality, of excommunication by the bishop.⁵¹ But even if both attended, one party might reject the judgment. For that case a procedure was established for that party to be summoned before the king. By failing to appear before the king the offender placed himself outside the king's protection and forfeited his property.⁵²

The threat of the feud might well have secured a reasonably stable society. But it certainly depended on a widespread readiness to answer violence with violence. It was, I would suggest, a society in which a private individual would have been more likely to have to act violently or to experience violence inflicted by others than he would have under Roman administration. This was after all a society whose leaders were psychologically and materially better equipped for violence than the Roman elite had been. They were a military class, armed and frequently at war, and thus different from the civilian elite of the Roman Empire. Society in the successor kingdoms was, therefore, almost bound to be more violent than a society in which retaliation was, at least in principle, a state monopoly, as it was under Roman imperial administration and is in our society.⁵³ Of course when defining a society as violent everything is relative. England has in the last decade become more violent in that there is more gun crime. The USA has long had proportionally more gun crime than the United Kingdom and in that sense it is a more violent society than Britain. But it is safe to say that Merovingian Gaul was more violent than either and also more violent than Roman Gaul.

50 Gregory of Tours, *HF* V.32 describes how an attempt to settle a dispute, without intervention of a court through the accused's swearing on the tomb of St Denis that he was innocent, broke down when the aggrieved party refused to accept the oath and the two sides fought a battle inside the church. The outcome was that both sides rushed to the king's court, which ordered the bishop of Paris to settle the conflict, which he did, imposing a fine.

51 Excommunication: Gregory of Tours, *HF* VII.39; V.39; V.32.

52 *Pactus legis Salicae* 56 establishes the fine of fifteen solidi for one "who, summoned to court by the king's law, does not come." But this may be for a slighter form of contempt than the penalty set down in *Salian Law* 56.5–6.

53 This is not to argue that Franks were more savage and less in control of their passions than Romans but only that in Merovingian Gaul an individual was much more likely to be required to engage in personal violence.

Goths and Romans in the *Leges Visigothorum**

A Minimal View of Importance of the Entry of the Barbarians into the Roman Empire

There has recently been a tendency to minimise the part of the barbarians in the fall of the Roman Empire. Can the drastic transformation of the Roman world really be attributed to invasion by Germanic tribes (*gentes*), or are they perhaps the results of internal developments?

Walter Goffart minimises the role of the *gentes*: “In this panorama of relentless shrinkage, barbarians as recruits or suppliants for peace could consistently be perceived as the desirable lower-cost alternative (to traditional regular army units). The cost-benefit equation of their request offered an opportunity not to be missed. Vandals and Goths introduced no alternative to the *nomen Romanum*; they were not rivals, proposing a different way of life or competing for loyalty. The barbarians could be recruited into the imperial enterprise because they asked for nothing more than to carry it forward and share its blessings.”¹

Contributors to a volume edited by A. Gillett largely defend this view.² Bowlus describes the *gentes* as “the ‘imagined’ communities Wenskus and Wolfram presume existed”,³ Gillett argues that ethnicity is a circumstantial not a shaping identity.⁴ Kulikowski uses the inadequacy of our sources as an argument to deconstruct the *gentes*, concluding that when sources label individuals ethnically we cannot be sure what this means, but “what we can do is

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1 W. Goffart, *Barbarian Tides: The Migration Age and the Later Roman Empire* (Philadelphia 2006), 238 (shortened).

2 A. Gillett (ed.), *On Barbarian Identity. Critical approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout 2002).

3 C.R. Bowlus, ‘Ethnogenesis: the tyranny of a concept’, in Gillett 2002 op. cit. (n. 2), 241–256, on 256.

4 A. Gillett, ‘Was ethnicity politicized in the earliest medieval kingdoms?’, in Gillett 2002 op. cit. (n. 2) 85–121, on 86.

ask in every single instance what that ethnic identification meant in context".⁵ Kulikowski's scepticism is excessive. In the opinion of this writer, and of generations of earlier scholars, not all of them blinkered by rabid German nationalism, the sources do adequately show that the *gentes* were real, and historically important.

The complex of duties and privileges that constituted Roman citizenship had been an essential instrument in the making of the Roman Empire. By spreading of Roman citizenship the Romans won the cooperation of provincial elites, and secured the stability of the Empire. Citizenship conferred enormous advantages to individuals who possessed it. When Paul faced a beating and torture at the hand of a Roman official it was enough to say that he was a Roman citizen and "I appeal unto Caesar",⁶ for his case to be withdrawn from the local official to be transferred to Rome and the emperor.

The spread of Roman citizenship was accompanied by Romanization. Although this term is now banned, we have no better alternative to describe the transformation in territories under Roman rule. Prominent among the changes were the introduction of the Latin language, and of Roman law. Roman law and citizenship were closely linked, because Roman citizens used Roman law. After the *Constitutio Antoniniana* of AD 212 all inhabitants of the Empire were Roman citizens, and all used some kind of Roman law.

But in Hispania in the 6th and 7th centuries AD the situation had changed totally. Every Hispano-Roman was still in law a Roman citizen, but there were also some very important inhabitants who were not Roman citizens: the Goths. Their status was that of 'federates', that is allies of the Empire, and their identity was ethnic, i.e. Gothic, but they were the ruling people of the country, and their leader was its King.

How did this coexistence of two peoples, the old rulers and the new ruling people, work? By far the best source is the law book of the Gothic kings. Historians have traditionally given both law book and kings the epithet *Visigothorum*, i.e. of the Visigoths, and so conveniently distinguish them from the Ostrogoths in Italy. However the name Visigoths was not used by writers earlier than Cassiodorus. It is a creation of the age of Theoderic.⁷ In this paper the convention of describing the western Goths as Visigoths is maintained, but that *gens* and its kings identified themselves simply as Goths. The oldest

5 M. Kulikowski, 'Nation versus army: a necessary contrast?', in Gillett 2002 op. cit. (n. 2), 69–84, on 83–4.

6 Acts 22.28 and Acts 25.11.

7 It is used by Procopius, *Bell.* 3.2.7; 8.5.5.

completely preserved edition of the Visigothic Code dates from AD 654.⁸ This includes many older laws, but some of these have certainly been edited, and a good deal of the legislation of the earlier kings is likely to have been omitted as no longer relevant. The *Leges Visigothorum* (or more correctly *Liber Iudiciorum*) therefore represents the condition of Spain not when the Goths first entered the country in the fifth century, but more than two hundred years later.

Goths and Romans in the *Leges Visigothorum*

All the laws are in good Latin and both the structure of the Code, and the legislation, are based on Roman models. The laws themselves probably include some Germanic elements,⁹ but these are not conspicuous, and even their identification is controversial. Scholars are agreed that the law issued and interpreted by the Gothic kings was essentially Roman.¹⁰ For our theme it is an important fact that the vast majority of the laws make no distinction between

8 The latest codification was that of Erwig, issued in 683, revising the Code of Chindasuinth and Reccesuinth. The Code of Erwig has been preserved in two copies. The Code of Chindasuinth and his son Reccesuinth, the *Liber Iudiciorum*, was issued in 654. It also has been preserved in two manuscripts, and is thus the earliest Visigothic Code to have been preserved entirety. It greatly expanded the Code of Leovigild of 586, of which no copy has been preserved, but 300 of its laws, labelled as *Antiquae* have been taken over into the later Codes, not necessarily unedited. The first Visigothic Code of which some laws have survived in the later Codes, is that of Euric (*Cod.Eur.*), probably of 476. A few fragments of this Code have been preserved on a palimpsest. The standard text is K. Zeumer (ed.), *Leges Visigothorum* (MGH Legum sectio 1) (Hannover & Leipzig 1892) (= *LV*).

9 I. Velazquez, 'Jural relations as an indicator of syncretism from the law of inheritance to the *dum illicita* of Chindasuinth', in P. Heather (ed.), *The Visigoths from the Migration Period to the Seventh Century* (Woodbridge 1999), 225–259, traces the development of the Visigothic law of inheritance, concluding that the Kings' legislation is basically the adaptation of Roman law to current conditions, but of Roman law which was compatible with Gothic, i.e. Germanic custom. The list of fixed payments of compensation for injury to different parts of the body in *LV* 6.4.3 looks Germanic to P.D. King, *Law and Society in the Visigothic Kingdom* (Cambridge 1972), 91; so does the taking of theft more seriously than robbery (*ibid.*, 254–58) and the punishment of *decalvatio* (scalping or perhaps merely shaving off of hair; *ibid.*, 90 n. 5); perhaps also the 'Germanic' dowry *LV* 3.1.5; *Form. Vis* no. 20.

10 "Neither feud nor self-help—the two inextricably connected in Germanic practice—was accorded a regular and legitimate place in the legal scheme of things.", King 1972, op. cit. (n. 9), 86. "There is precious little trace in Erwig's Code of the all-important position which, at an earlier Germanic stage, the kindred had held in society." (*ibid.*, 222).

Goths (*Gothi*) and Romans (*Romani*), and what is more, only a very small proportion even mention either name.¹¹

Astonishingly, there are only three topics which have produced legislation required by the coexistence of two peoples: 1. A certain category of estates; 2. Intermarriage between Goths and Romans; 3. The status of manumitted Christian slaves of Jews. The majority of these laws relate to disputes arising over the two thirds of an estate assigned to a Goth and the third left to the Roman owner at the time of the original settlement, or perhaps settlements. Most of these laws even go back to the Code of Euric compiled, in Gaul, before the establishment of the Gothic kingdom in Spain,¹² showing that the Visigoths were settled in Spain on the same terms as they had been in Gaul. The laws not found in the fragments of the Code of Euric are however labelled '*Antiquae*', so they go back at least to the Code of Leovigild of AD 586.¹³ Later laws on disputes about landed property do not distinguish between lands of Romans and lands of Goths.¹⁴ It looks as if the distinction had become irrelevant for disputes over the ownership of most kinds of land, as indeed for legal disputes of almost any kind.

On the other hand the fact that the laws with reference to respectively *sortes Gothorum* and *tertia Romanorum* were taken into the latest of the Codes, the Code of Erwig of AD 683, suggests that they had not been abolished, and that these estates continued to have a distinct legal status, and this irrespective of whether they were still owned by a Goth or a Roman, and that they kept this status to the end of the Visigothic kingdom. One of the *Antiquae* which retained a place in the latest edition of the Code lays down that if a Goth seizes the 'third' that had been left to a Roman,¹⁵ he must give it back. The reason for this law is to avoid loss to the fiscus. The *tertia Romanorum* therefore still paid tax, while the *sortes Gothorum* remained exempt.¹⁶ This is confirmed by the previous law, which lays down that in the case that a portion of a Roman's *tertia* has been alienated to somebody else (presumably a Goth), and the new owner has placed a tenant on it, that tenant will become liable for the tax, if

11 I have argued that the legislation of Gothic kings was territorial and addressed to Goths and Romans alike from the beginning, in 'Citizen status and law in the Roman Empire and the Visigothic Kingdom', in W. Pohl (ed.), *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300–800* (Leiden, Boston, Köln 1998), 131–152, esp. 146–49.

12 *LV* 10.3.5 = *Cod.Eur.* 276; 10.2.1–3 and 10.3.1 = *Cod.Eur.* 277; 5.4.20 = *Cod.Eur.* 312.

13 *LV* 10.1.7–9; 10.1.16; 10.2.1; 10.3.5.

14 *LV* 10.1.17–19, already in *Cod.Eur.* 312: *Romanus qui Gotho donauerit rem* reappears, in *LV* 5.4.20 without the ethnic qualification.

15 *LV* 10.1.16: *Ut si Goti de Romanorum tertiam quippiam tulerint* (...).

16 *LV* 10.1.16 (*Antiqua*, *Recc. Erv.*): *ut nihil fisco debeat deperire*.

the land was returned to Roman ownership.¹⁷ Presumably the tenant had not been liable while the land was in possession of the Goth. One might compare this to the status of land that has once belonged to a *curialis* (decurion), which continued to be taxed to pay for certain services irrespective of who was the present owner.¹⁸

Up to the reign of Leovigild (568–586) Goths were divided from Romans by a marriage ban.¹⁹ Leovigild abolished this ban on the ground that it was not right to split up a marriage of partners who were equal in dignity and lineage.²⁰ Intermarriage was therefore permitted, subject only to consent of the girl's family.²¹ It is worth noting that Leovigild maintained the distinction between Goths and Romans, but merely asserted that they were equal in status—at least as far as eligibility for marriage was concerned. The law must nevertheless have accelerated the fusion of the two peoples. A further step in the same direction was taken by Leovigild's son and successor Reccared. In 587 he converted from Arian to Catholic Christianity. In the following year he had the lands and churches of the Arian Church transferred to that of the Catholics, and went on to summon the bishops of his kingdom to meet at the Third Council of Toledo over which the king himself presided. The assembled bishops were duly induced to denounce Arianism and adopt Catholicism, which became the established religion of the Visigothic kingdom.²² Not all Goths accepted this revolution peacefully, but it is probably correct to assume that henceforth the majority of Goths and Romans were no longer divided from each other by religion. One might have expected these measures of Leovigild and his son

17 LV 10.1.15 (*Antiqua, Recc. Erv.*). Both laws are obviously very much shortened summaries of much longer laws.

18 LV 5.4.19 (*Recc. Erv.*): *curialibus uel priuatis inter se uendendi, donandi uel commutandi ita licitum erit, ut ille, qui acceperit, functionem rei acceptae publicis utilitatibus inpendere non recuset.*

19 G. Haenel, *Lex Romana Visigothorum* (Berlin 1849), 92–3; *CTh* 3.14.1.

20 LV 3.1.1: *personas quas dignitas conparet exequabit in genere.*

21 LV 3.1.1: *Premissa petitione (...) consultum perquirendo, prosapie sollempniter consensu comite, percipere coniugem.* There is some uncertainty about the text, above all the relevance here of *comite*. This is sometimes taken require consent of the *comes civitatis*, but LV 3.1.2, insisting on the necessity of the girl's father's permission for any marriage offers the key to the interpretation of the passage.

22 J.D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova, et amplissima Collectio*, vol. 9 (Paris 1901), 977 ff.; E.A. Thompson, *The Goths in Spain* (Oxford 1969), 94–101.

Reccared to have ended the dualism of Goths and Romans.²³ But I will argue that this was not so.

Two laws assign the status of Roman citizenship to the manumitted Christian slaves of the Jews. This would seem to imply that though freed they did not become Goths.²⁴

Goths and Romans in the mid Seventh Century, the Age of Isidore of Seville

It would seem that by the end of the 6th century, as far as law was concerned, there was little distinction between the status of Goths and of Romans, and as we have seen, rules for the settling of disputes between Goths and Romans are conspicuously absent from the great majority of the laws. Moreover as the laws are written in Latin, Goths were expected to understand the Roman language. Indeed there is very little evidence that they still used Gothic.²⁵

Documents of many different kinds, inscribed on slate, have been found in a number of places in the Meseta of central Spain. These confirm that the use of written documents in legal processes, and in much of the business of estate management, was widespread even in the countryside. The nomenclature found in these documents includes both Latin and Gothic names, with the Latin names in the majority. The language is invariably Latin, if Latin of a very vulgar character.²⁶ Goths and Romans evidently used the same courts and the same laws, and the same language.

23 But anthropological evidence suggests that the mixing of different ethnic groups living in the same surroundings is often a slow process: G. Ausenda, 'Mixed society', in P. Heather (ed.), *The Visigoths from the Migration Period to the Seventh Century* (San Marino 1999), 501–503.

24 The only references are *LV* 12.2.13 and 14, both of Sisebutus AD 612–621; also *Recc. Err.* *LV* 12.2.14 explains the legal significance of Roman citizenship in this case as that the liberated slaves will have no continuing obligation towards former owners: *nulli scilicet Hebreo nec cuilibet obsequio reseruato*. The liberated slaves would be taxed. *LV* 12.2.13: *et prenotati in polipticis publicis adque secundum eorum peculium iustissima aderatione censiti*, but this was probably true of all slaves both before and after manumission.

25 On possible remnants of Gothic vocabulary still in use see I. Velasquez, 'The Visigoths', in H.-W. Goetz, J. Jarnut, & W. Pohl (eds.), *Regna and Gentes* (Leiden, Boston 2003), 161–217, on 184.

26 See I. Velázquez Soriano, *Las Pizarras Visigodas. Entre el Latin y su disgregacion. La lengua hablada en Hispania, siglos VI–VIII* (Burgos, 2004).

So a number of scholars, notably Claude and Teillet,²⁷ have provided plausible arguments that there no longer was any distinction between Goths and Romans. But I don't think that that interpretation is compatible with the evidence of the literary texts which, as I will argue, preserved the distinction between Goths and Romans at least to the mid seventh century,²⁸ so that both in literary writings and canons of ecclesiastical councils *Gothus* still designated a member of the Gothic ruling people, as opposed to a Hispano-Roman. This is clear in the first place from the *Lives of the Fathers of Merida* of perhaps 633–638 AD,²⁹ whose author when introducing the principal characters tells us whether they were of Greek, Gothic or of Roman origin.³⁰ It clearly still made a difference. Isidore, bishop of Seville c. 600–636, a man of Roman descent and great learning, who exercised very great influence at the Gothic court, wrote a history of the Goths ending in the year 625, presenting them as a people, with a history and a warlike character of its own. He established the Goths as a historical people, very much as Jordanes had done at Constantinople about sixty years earlier. There is for him as yet no question of a Gothic people incorporating all inhabitants of Spain irrespective whether of Gothic or of Roman descent. The beautiful land of Spain has been 'betrothed' successively to Romans and to Goths; as he states in the conclusion to the preface of his history: "And although this same Romulean power, initially victorious, betrothed you to itself, now it is the most flourishing people of the Goths, who in their turn, after many victories all over the world, have eagerly seized you and loved you."³¹ He concludes with the statement that the Romans were now serving the

27 D. Claude, 'Remarks about relations between Visigoths and Hispano-Romans in the seventh century', in Pohl 1998 op. cit. (n. 11), 117–130. S. Teillet, *Des Goths à la nation gothique: les origines de l'idée de nation en Occident du v^e au vii^e siècle* (Paris 1984), 553: "la distinction entre *Gothi* et *Romani* tend à disparaître, et le vocable *Gothi*, sauf exception, en vient à désigner, déjà depuis Jean de Biclar, les *populi* qui constituent la *gens Gothorum*, indifféremment Goths et Hispano-Romains."

28 So also Velasquez 2003, op. cit. (n. 25), *passim*.

29 A.C. Macías (ed.), *Liber Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium*, (Merida 1988), 29–30 (= VPE).

30 Of the bishops of Merida, Paulus 530–560 (IV.1) and Fidel 56–571 (IV.III) are said to have been Greeks, i.e. from the Greek speaking East, Masona 571–605 was a Catholic Goth (v.1), his Arian rival Sunna was a Goth (v.x). Another rival Nepopis was an Egyptian to judge by his name (v.vi). Certain counts of cities were Goths (v.x), but Claudius the duke of Merida was a Roman and a Catholic (v.x); bishop Renovatus, c. AD 633, was a Goth (v.xiv).

31 Th. Mommsen (ed.), *Historia Gothorum*, MGH, AA 11, *Chronica minora* saec. IV.V.VI.VII. (11), 267–295, on 267, lines 22–25. English translation: Isidore of Seville, *History of the*

Goths. "Subjected, the Roman soldier serves the Goths, whom he sees being served by many peoples and by Spain itself."³² The merging of the two peoples has not yet happened, and near contemporary texts referring to Goths must be taken to mean Goths as opposed to Hispano-Romans.

The evidence that the distinction between Goths and Romans was maintained at least well into the seventh century is unambiguous. We have already seen that a freed slave gains the status of a Roman citizen, and therefore by implication does not become a Goth.³³ In 655, the ninth council of Toledo declared that freedmen and women manumitted by the Church had *conubium* with neither Goth nor Roman.³⁴ As late as AD 693 a law confirming the canons of Toledo XVI states that the king's sword bearer, one Theudemund, clearly a Goth, must no longer hold the position of *numerarius* at Merida since this was *contra generis uel ordinis sui usum*. The *numerarius* was a civic official. He was elected by the bishop and citizens.³⁵ It looks as if Goths were not supposed to hold this nor perhaps any position in local government.³⁶

Notwithstanding the Roman character of its laws, it is clear that the identity of the kingdom was unambiguously Gothic. Its name proclaims it as the kingdom and the land (*patria*) of the Gothic people—and not only its name. For the king and the great majority of his councillors had Gothic names, and were clearly Goths, even though there were a few Romans among them too.³⁷ At the same time, Romans, or at least men with Latin names, were very prominent among the bishops,³⁸ outnumbering Goths by almost two to one up to the middle of the 7th century. Subsequently the proportion of Gothic bishops attending the national synods increased to thirty-four and forty-two per cent, so that Goths came to form a much higher proportion of bishops than they can have formed of the population as a whole.³⁹ So judging by the names of grandees (and names are practically the only evidence we have), secular government

Kings of the Goths, preface & transl. by K.B. Wolf in *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain* (Liverpool 1990), 81–110 at p. 82.

32 Wolf 1990, op. cit. (n. 31), 110.

33 *LV* 12.2.13; 12.2.14; *Formulae manumissionis*, *Form Vis* n° 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

34 *C. Toletana* IX, c.13 but in 657, *LV* 4.5.7 of Wamba confirmed denial of *conubium* omitting reference to Goths and Romans.

35 *LV* 12.1.2.

36 Assuming that here *genus* is equivalent to *gens*, cf. *C. Toletana* VI, c. 17 *nisi genere Gothus*.

37 Zeumer 1892, op. cit. (n. 8), 485–486.

38 J.N. Hillgarth, *The Visigoths in History and Legend* (Toronto 2009), 46. Among bishops the highest proportion of Germanic names is found in the Meseta, in the dioceses of Palencia and Salamanca, where it is likely that many Goths were settled.

39 Thompson 1969, op. cit. (n. 22), 289–296.

was in the hands of Goths, and the church too was becoming gothicized, though more gradually. Goths clearly remained the top people.

The importance of Gothic ethnicity in the mid seventh century is clearly shown in the canons of the 4th, 5th and 6th Councils of Toledo.⁴⁰ Canon 75 of the fourth Council of 663 AD threatens with anathema anybody who breaks his oath of allegiance to the king. The purpose of this oath is to strengthen the position of the king and the stability of the Gothic people (*pro robore nostrorum regnum et stabilitate gentis Gothorum*) and to prevent a division between land and the gens (*nullum patriae gentisque discidium per uim atque ambitum oriatur*). That the *gens* and their land in this law are precisely the Goths, and not the entire population of Spain, can be seen from a subsequent clause which makes a distinction between the peoples inhabiting the whole of Spain on the one hand, and on the other the land and people of the Goths and the monarchy on behalf of whose security the oath has been taken.⁴¹ The canon goes on to state that on the death of the king, his successor is to be elected by the leadership of the whole *gens* (*totius gentis primatus*) together with the bishops in common assembly. The ethnic character of the monarchy is stated even less ambiguously in the canons of the fifth and the sixth Councils of AD 636, which insist that the king must be of noble Gothic extraction.⁴²

Ethnicity clearly did matter. The Goths did substitute an alternative to the *nomen Romanum*. The tribal cohesion of the Goths was a powerful 'shaping' factor in the establishment and functioning of the Visigothic kingdom. The Roman inhabitants evidently acquiesced in this situation. A system of

40 The synods were national institutions, working in close association with the king and his leading men. The constitutional phraseology of their canons ought not therefore to be dismissed as derived from "Old Testament models: as salvific, not an ethnic discourse" as it is by Gillett 2002, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 121.

41 J. Vives (ed.), *Concilios visigóticos e Hispano-Romanos* (Barcelona etc. 1963), C. Toletana IV, c. 75: *Quicumque igitur a nobis* (the bishops and royal councillors) *uel totius Spaniae populis* (Romans and Goths) *qualibet coniuratione (...) sacramentum fidei sua, quod pro patriae gentisque Gothorum statu* (the land and people of the Goths) *uel obseruatione regiae salutis* (the monarchy) *pollicitus est, temeraverit... Gens* and *patria* are distinct from *populi* also among electors of king Wamba in AD 672: *Wamba (...) quem sacerdotalis unctio declarauit, quem totius gentis et patriae communio elegit, quem populorum amabilitas exquisiuit*. B. Krusch & W. Levison (eds.), *Historia Wambae*, MGH SRM 5 (Hannover 1910), 501, lines 16–18.

42 C. Toletana V, c. 3, of AD 636: nobody to be king *quem nec electio omnium prouehit, nec Gothicae gentis nobilitas ad hunc honoris apicem trahit*. So also C. Toletana VI, c. 17 of AD 638: *nullus (...) uel extraneae gentis homo, nisi genere Gothus (...) prouehatur ad apicem regni*.

government which used so many Roman institutions, above all Roman language, law, and administration based on writing, could only have functioned with the cooperation of the Roman population, but we still do not really know how the system worked.

We know practically nothing about local government at city or village level. Romans were certainly neither oppressed nor discriminated against. We have seen that the Church was for a long time essentially a Roman institution. Cooperation of the Visigothic kings with the Church, and use of Church councils to legitimise royal authority were central features of the system of government.⁴³ The Church controlled education, and thus was responsible for the maintenance of a skill essential for the working of an administration based on literacy. The national synods of the Church were a kind of parliament, even though they met only once or twice in a reign, Bishops had a routine role in the sanctioning of taxation.⁴⁴ The Roman character of the Church therefore gave the Romans, or at least the Roman elite, a real say in the government of the country. It was even occasionally possible for Romans to hold important administrative posts.⁴⁵

Nevertheless the practical significance of the difference between Goths and Romans steadily diminished. The fact that both people shared the lands of Hispania, and owed loyalty to the same king, brought them ever closer together. In the 6th and early 7th centuries, Goths supplied the army of the kingdom,⁴⁶ as they had done in the Ostrogothic kingdom of Theoderic. But by the reign of Erwig (AD 680–687) Goths and Romans were equally liable for military service when the kingdom was at war.⁴⁷ In Julian of Toledo's *Historia Wambae*, written soon after 673, Hispania appears to be the unified nation.

43 Thompson 1969, op. cit. (n. 22), 275–289; J. Arce, *Esperando a los árabes: Los visigodos en Hispania (507–711)* (Madrid 2011) in his chapter Concilios (pp. 233–259), summed up at p. 258: “Es una forma de cesaropapismo que consolida una alianza indisoluble entre Iglesia y el poder civil.”

44 C. Toletana III, c. 7; *De fisco Barcinonensi*: J.D. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, vol. 10 (Paris 1901), 473–4.

45 Eg. Claudius, Dux of Lusitania, *VPE*, op. cit. (n. 29), 10–11. Leading men of the court included a few men with Roman names: Vitulus, Paulus (3 times), Severianus, Severinus, David are among secular grandees subscribing to the minutes of synods 653–693. But the overwhelming majority of the names are Gothic (Zeumer 1892, op. cit. (n. 8), 485–486); Thompson 1969 op. cit. (n. 22), 255.

46 LV 9.2.2 (*Antiqua, Recc. Erv.*): *Serui dominici (...) quando Gotos in hostem exire conpellunt.*

47 LV 9.2.9: *(...) seu sit Gotus siue Romanus, necnon ingenuus quisque uel etiam manumissus (...) decimam partem seruorum suorum secum in expeditione bellica ducturus accedat.*

Julian can now describe Wamba's army as *exercitus Hispaniae*.⁴⁸ When king Egica (687–702) published an edict cancelling tax arrears, he addressed all his subjects alike, making no distinction between Goths and Romans.⁴⁹ But this did not mean that 'Gothicity' had been totally abandoned even then. The *dux* Paulus, who rebelled against Wamba in 673, may have been a Roman,⁵⁰ but the great majority of his leading followers had Gothic names,⁵¹ as had most of the grandees of king Wamba.⁵² The overwhelming proportion of the top jobs was surely still filled with Goths. Among the secular grandees signing the 16th Council of Toledo of 693, the predominance of Goths was as overwhelming as ever. Among the bishops, 25 had Gothic names and thirty-five Roman. Roman bishops were still in a majority, but the proportion of Gothic bishops is much higher than the proportion of Goths in the total population as a whole.⁵³ So even in this ecclesiastical council, taking clerical and secular members together, Goths were in a slight majority.⁵⁴ The Goths were still the ruling people.

I hope to have shown that Goths had a strong sense of ethnic identity from the time that they entered Hispania to the time of the Arab conquest, that the Visigothic kingdom was in a real sense a kingdom of the Goths. This leaves an important question unanswered: Who exactly were these Goths? Who decided that somebody was now a Goth? How could somebody become a Goth? It is clear—to our generation at least—that Gothiness cannot have depended entirely, or even mainly, on biology. The descendants of the immigrants from Gaul after the destruction of their kingdom in 507, must always have been a small minority in Hispania.⁵⁵ It would have been impossible for the descendants of Alaric's Visigoths to have survived as a powerful military power for three centuries, the losses through battle and disease, the disruption

48 *Historia Wambae* op. cit. (n. 41), 513. *The Story of Wamba, Julian of Toledo's Historia Wambae Regis*, translated with introduction and notes by J.M. Pizarro (Washington 2005), 206 (*Historia*), 227–229 (*Insultatio*).

49 *Edictum Ervigii Regis de tributis relaxatis* in Zeumer 1892 op. cit. (n. 8), 479–80. The concession is made *omnibus populis regni nostri, tam priuatis quam etiam fiscalibus seruis, uiris seu etiam feminis*, (...).

50 Thompson 1969 op. cit. (n. 22), 214 n. 5.

51 *Historia Wambae*, op. cit. (n. 41), 506, 507, 512, 513, 531–533.

52 Thompson 1969, op. cit. (n. 22), 226. Zeumer 1892 op. cit. (n. 8), 486.

53 Thompson 1969, op. cit. (n. 22), 295.

54 Goths sometimes took Christian / Roman names (Thompson 1969, op. cit. (n. 22), 289).

55 G. Ripoll Lopez, 'The Arrival of the Visigoths in Hispania', in Pohl 1998 op. cit. (n. 11), 153–187, on 160–162 on the very rough estimates of the Gothic population. Her very hypothetical figure of 130,000 individuals, or some 20,500 families is probably an overestimate.

of repeated migration, and of settlement in separate areas spread over the vast lands of Hispania, losses through intermarriage and through assimilation, unless they regularly received reinforcements from outside the *gens*. We lack evidence how exactly this happened. We can only speculate. It is likely enough that Romans who helped the Gothic king run his administration at court, and in much greater numbers at city level, might eventually simply be accepted as Goths or even formally admitted into the *gens* by the king. Clients,⁵⁶ *buccellarii*,⁵⁷ and tenants of Gothic landlords might conceivably be treated as if they were Goths, at least as Goths of the lower order.⁵⁸ Though we cannot observe the process by which Romans became Goths, we can be certain that the Goths who entered Spain from Gaul after 507 represented only a small proportion of the ancestors of the Goths who were defeated by the Arabs after 711.

Goths after the Arab Conquest⁵⁹

The Arab invasion ended the Gothic kingdom for ever. This is clear from the Chronicles.⁶⁰ Up to the Islamic conquest the Spanish kingdom is regularly referred to as 'the kingdom of the Goths.'⁶¹ The army defeated by the Arabs is the army of the Goths.⁶² But, after the defeat and death of king Roderic, both

56 *LV* (*Antiqua, Recc. Erv.*) 5.3.1–4.

57 *LV* 5.3.1; *Saiones* (*LV* 5.3.2) seem to have been a superior kind of dependent, since weapons given to a *saio* by his patron became his permanent property, while a *buccellarius* would have to return them if he changed patron.

58 The Visigothic kings adopted the Roman legal privileging of *honestiores* over *humiliores*. On Roman practice see P. Garnsey, *Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire* (Oxford 1970) 222–233. Gothic examples: *LV* 2.4.3; 8.3.12; 9.3.3.

59 R. Collins, *The Arab Conquest of Spain, 710–797* (London 1989).

60 J. Gil Fernández, J.I. Ruiz de la Peña (eds.) & J.L. Moralejo (tr.): *Crónicas asturianas* (Oviedo 1985) includes both versions of the *Crónica Alfonso III* and the *Crónica Albeldense*. On the chronicles see Hillgarth 2009, op. cit. (n. 38), 66–73. The chronicle of Alfonso III is transmitted in two versions, both early 10th century, of which the one preserved at Roda (abbreviated Rot.) is thought closer to the original and more reliable than the other, abbreviated Seb. (because preceded by a letter to Sebastianus). English translation of Roda version in Wolf 1990, op. cit. (n. 31), 159–177, of *Chronicle of 754*, 111–158. The *Crónica Albeldense* is not included.

61 *Chronicle of Alfonso III* (Rot.), Wolf 1990, op. cit. (n. 31), c. 4, 6, 7. *Chronicle of 754* = *Continuationes Isidorianae*, Th. Mommsen (ed.), *MGH*, AA 11, *Chronica minora saec. IV.V.VI.VII.* (11), 349 line 29, 350 line 29, 35 lines 5 and 11 = Wolf 1990, op. cit. (n. 31), 111–158, in c. 44, 51, 52, 54.

62 Wolf 1990, op. cit. (n. 31): *Chronicle of Alfonso III* (Rot.), c. 7, 9; *Chronicle of 754* c. 52.

the army and the kingdom of the Goths simply disappeared from the narrative. In the regions under Islamic rule Gothicization was replaced by Islamization. Gothic nobles cooperated with the new masters of Hispania during the early years of the Arab take-over.⁶³ Local nobles play a leading part in troubles in the early days of Arab rule. They now have Arab names and have converted to Islam,⁶⁴ though they maintained, perhaps correctly, that they were descendants of Gothic families.⁶⁵

A Christian kingdom in the North, a region not conquered by the Arabs, was established, but it was no longer a kingdom of the Goths. The text of a donation by King Alfonso II (791–842) to the church of Oviedo tells us that “in the era 749 (AD 711) the glory of the kingdom (of the Goths) was lost together with its king Roderic. From this disaster thy right hand, O Christ, rescued thy servant Pelagius, who being raised to the power of prince (*princeps*) . . . struck down the enemy and defended the *gens* of the Christians and Asturians.”⁶⁶ The oldest of the northern chronicles, the Chronicle of Albelda, which originally ended in AD 881, states that: “The kingdom of the Goths perished and with it by fear or the sword all the flowers of the Gothic people”,⁶⁷ and, as we have seen, even the later so-called Chronicle of Alfonso III is explicit that the Kingdom of the Goths had come to an end. The Christian kings of the North were kings of Asturia. They are never described as ‘kings of the Goths’. Their identity was not ethnic but territorial, and above all Christian. But they did claim to be heirs of Gothic kings. The dynasty may well have had a Gothic origin, though in a chronicle closely associated with the dynasty, their links with the Gothic royal family, people and institutions are clearly exaggerated. In the more reliable version of the Chronicle of Alfonso III, Pelayo (Pelagius), who won a decisive victory over the Arabs

63 On Theodemir (Theudimer): *Chronicle of 754 = Continuationes Isidorianae*, op. cit. (n. 61), 354; tr. Wolf 1990, op. cit. (n. 31) c. 87; P. Guichard, *Structures sociales ‘orientales’ et ‘occidentales’ dans l’Espagne musulmane* (Paris 1977), 241–290.

64 On these *mulawads* see Wolf 1990, op. cit. (n. 31): *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, c. 22, 25–26.

65 D.J. Wasserstein, ‘Inventing tradition and constructing identity: the genealogy of Umar ibn Hafsūn between Christianity and Islam’, *Al-Qantara* 23 (2002), 269–297. R. Marín-Guzmán, ‘Rebellion and political fragmentation of al-Andalus: A study of the revolt of Umar ibn Hafsūn in the period of the Amīr abd Allāh (888–912)’, *Islamic Studies* 33.4 (1994), 419–473. E. Manzano Moreno, *La frontera de al-Andalus en época de los Omeyyas* (Madrid 1991), 110–129. On the Banu Qasi: *Chronicle of Alfonso III* (Rot.), 25–26. A. Christys, *Christians in al-Andalus 711–1000* (Richmond 2002), 158–183, about Ibn al-Qutiyya.

66 A.C. Floriano, *Diplomática española* 1, 118–141, on 120, cited by Hillgarth 2009 op. cit. (n. 38), 65. Its authenticity has been doubted but according to Hillgarth it is now generally thought be dependable.

67 *Crónica Albeldense*, 17.3 = Gil Fernández 1985, op. cit. (n. 60), 183.

and became founder of a Christian realm in the North, is said to have been, as indeed he probably was, a noble Goth, and Alfonso I, his son in law, the founder of the Asturian dynasty, is said to have been of 'the royal line'.⁶⁸ According to the less reliable version of the Chronicle, Pelagius was elected to be their prince (*princeps*) by Gothic refugees who had fled from the Arabs to Asturia.⁶⁹ Peter of Cantabria, the brother in law of Pelagius, and father of Alfonso I, is described as a descendant of the Gothic Kings Leovigild and Reccared.⁷⁰ According to the *Chronicle of Abelda*, king Alfonso II (791–842) of Asturia "restored the whole Gothic *ordo* at Oviedo, as it had been at Toledo."⁷¹ It was not only members of the royal family who felt it worth while to preserve a link with the lost Gothic past. Early documents from Asturia show that the king's landed subjects preferred Gothic to Latin i.e. Roman names. The same was true in neighbouring Catalonia, which did not become an independent kingdom, but, for a time at least was part of the Frankish world.⁷² In the region of Santillana, charters still refer to Goths and Romans as separate peoples in the eleventh century.⁷³ A mixture of historical facts and of legends about the Goths has helped to shape Spanish identity until to day.

Conclusion

The *Leges Visigothorum* show that, except in respect of the special category of land created by the division of estates between Goths and Romans at the time of the original Gothic settlements, Goths were not privileged over Romans legally. The royal legislation applied to both peoples, yet a distinction between Goths and Hispano-Romans was maintained right until the end of the kingdom. The Goths remained the ruling people, and the king's principal advisers were overwhelmingly Goths. In a situation like that the historians look for 'strategies of distinction' and 'markers of ethnic identity'.⁷⁴ In the case of the Goths in Spain

68 The story: J. Gil Fernandez (ed.), *Crónica Rotensis*, in Id. 1985, op. cit. (n. 60), 122–130, transl. Wolf 1990, op. cit. (n. 31), c. 8–11. Pelayo (Pelagius) the son of a Gothic duke killed by king Wittiza, wins a great victory over the Arabs, and becomes king of the Asturians. His daughter marries Alfonso, son of Peter, leader of the Cantabrians, 'of the royal (i.e. Gothic?) line', who became king of Asturia and founder of a dynasty.

69 Gil Fernandez 1985, op. cit. (n. 60), *Crónicas Asturianas*, 123.

70 *Crónica Rotensis* 13 = *Crónicas Asturianas*, 131.

71 *Crónica Abeldense*, 15.9 = *Crónicas Asturianas*, 174.

72 Hillgarth 2009, op. cit. (n. 38), 78.

73 Hillgarth 2009, op. cit. (n. 38), 79.

74 See Pohl 1998 op. cit. (n. 11), *passim*.

these are not all obvious, or at least they become progressively less conspicuous. The Goths adopted the language and religions of the Romans, and their legislation was largely based on principles of Roman law. Judging by the development of the broaches and belt buckles buried with Gothic dead, their dress or at least its ornaments became assimilated to Byzantine-Mediterranean fashion.⁷⁵ They also seem to have abandoned distinct burial-customs. We cannot know whether they retained distinctions in dress. While royal officials had Roman titles, we do not know whether these titles disguise positions which were perhaps more ethnic than Roman. E.A. Thompson has argued that in the reign of Reccesuinth (649–672) the Latin title *iudex territorii* was replaced by the Gothic *thiufadus*.⁷⁶

Kulikowski is right to emphasize how badly informed we are about Gothic ethnicity, but what we know is enough to show that it was of fundamental importance. It was ethnic solidarity that enable Goths to win power first in Gaul and then in Spain, and to preserve the unity of their kingdom. Subsequently, it was the prestige and patronage of power which enabled the *gens* to maintain and enlarge its numbers. The story of the Goths is one of continuous transformation, involving both continuities and discontinuities, but to quote Heather, “without continuities there would have been no story”, without an active Gothic sense of ethnic solidarity there could have been no Gothic kingdom in Spain.

Latinization and Romanization too were essential elements in the creation and preservation of the kingdom. Latin language, Roman law and techniques of government, and Catholic religion, became so closely associated with the ruling *gens* that the kings, who established a kingdom in Asturia after the fall of the Gothic kingdom, proclaimed themselves the heirs not of the Romans but of the Goths.

This development reflected Late Roman culture. Roman language, religion and literature were honoured and transmitted in Gothic Spain, as in other parts of the late Roman world, but Roman culture no longer provided an emotional basis for a sense of Roman identity, or to use an anachronistic concept, for Roman patriotism. The wars which Leovigild (566–586) fought to unify Spain under Visigothic rule were fought against people who in law still were Roman

75 G. Ripoll López, ‘Symbolic life and signs of identity in Visigothic times’, in P. Heather (ed.), *The Visigoths from the Migration Period to the Seventh Century* (San Marino 1999), 403–431, esp. 414–424; Idem, *Toreutica de la Bética (siglos VI y VII D.C.)* (Barcelona 1998). S.A. Barney et al., *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (transl. introd. & notes, Cambridge 2006) 19.23.7: ‘Moustaches and red paint of the Goths’.

76 Thompson 1969, op. cit. (n. 22), 213.

citizens. But John of Biclaro and Isidore of Seville defined them not as Romans, but geographically and territorially by where they lived.⁷⁷ In his *Etymologies*, Isidore explains the term *ciuitas* as the collective description of the inhabitants, as opposed to the buildings, of a city. He does not mention Roman citizenship, which had been one of the principal bonds of the earlier empire, and whose possession had defined an individual as a Roman.⁷⁸ The concept of citizenship had lost its power to unite and to confer identity, and Roman culture had become separated from Roman identity. The Goths could appropriate a great deal of Roman culture without feeling that they had become Romans. Roman culture became Gothic culture. So it came about that a mixture of historical facts and of legends about the Goths has helped to shape Spanish identity until today.

77 John of Biclaro, transl. Wolf 1990, op. cit. (n. 31), c. 27, 32, 36, 40, 47, Isidore, *History* c. 49. Only the wars which Sisebut and Suinthila fought to expel the Byzantines from their last possessions in Spain are said to have been fought against Romans (Isidore, *History* c. 61–62). But this does not mean that ‘Romans’ in Hispanic sources of the time invariably means ‘Byzantines’.

78 Isidore, *Etymologies*, Barney 2006 op. cit. (n. 75), 15.2.1.

PART 2

The East



Syria: Defence and Settlement



The Impact of the Imposition of Roman Rule on Northern Syria*

The Romans in Northern Syria

The establishment of Roman power, above all the Augustan peace, made a very great impact on the province of Syria. Under the Julio-Claudians Roman government was largely indirect. Large areas were ruled by client kings, or petty chieftains. Roman power was concentrated in the north, with no fewer than four legions.¹ The Roman state presumably had treaty relationships with the rulers and nomad groups, though we have little information about these treaties.² In time, the incorporation of client states led to the movement of legions, north into Mesopotamia, and south into Judaea and Arabia. Syria was left with IV Scythica at Zeugma and III Gallica at Raphanea. In the reign of Nero, Corbulo established Roman forts along the left bank of the Euphrates, and along the edge of the desert between Soura on the Euphrates and Palmyra.³

After the Persian invasions of Syria of the middle third century the emperor Diocletian systematically reorganised the Roman military presence on the desert fringe. Subsequently a continuous chain of observation posts, large and small forts, lined the desert highway from Soura to Palmyra and from Palmyra to the Red Sea. Cavalry units were stationed well behind the frontier, at strategic cross roads. Along the desert road forts were within visible distance of each

* This article was previously published in *The Impact of the Roman Army 200 BC–AD 476*, eds. L. de Blois, & E. Lo Cassio, Leiden / Boston : Brill, 2007, pp. 421–438.

1 *IGLS* 1399; L.J.F. Keppie, 'Legions in the East from Augustus to Trajan,' in P. Freeman and D. Kennedy, *The defence of the Roman and Byzantine Near East* (Oxford 1986), 411–412; J.R. Rey-Coquais, 'Syrie romaine, de Pompée à Dioclétien', *Journal of Roman Studies* 68 (1978), 44–73.

2 R.O. Sullivan, 'The dynasty of Emesa', in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.8, 198–219 deals only with the most important of these relationships. Cf. F. Millar, *The Roman Near East* (Cambridge MS 1993), 430 on inscriptions honouring a *strategos of the nomads*, and a *strategos of the camp of the nomads*, in the Hauran.

3 Tacitus, *Annales* 15.3; M. Konrad, 'Frühkaiserliche Befestigungen an der Strata Diocletiana, neue Kleinfunde des 1. Jahrhunderts aus Nordsyrien', *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 9 (1996), 163ff.; Idem, *Der spätrömische Limes in Syrien. Archäologische Untersuchungen an den Grenzkastellen von Sura, Tetrapyrgium, Cholle und in Resafa* (Mainz 2001), 96–116, esp. 114–115.

other, but the garrisons were not large.⁴ The two legionary camps may have housed 1000 men, but the small forts only between 60 and a hundred.⁵ The Diocletianic system represented a defensive structure such as that region had never had before. It was not designed to repel a major invasion—which could hardly be expected across the desert. But the troops would certainly be able to police the conflict fraught relations between nomads and settled peasants, and to protect both from incursions of marauding bands. It is unlikely that the dramatic expansion of sedentary life in the following centuries could have happened without them.

The Condition of Northern Syria when it was Incorporated into the Roman Empire

As we have seen much of the country between the Seleucid cities, and some of the cities too, were controlled by local dynasts or leaders of tribal groups.⁶ The lands to the east of the Orontes plain, that is the limestone massif, and the lands beyond, seem to have been controlled by tribal federations.⁷ We know very little about them. They were ignored by Greek writers, and have left no written evidence of their own.

Agriculture without irrigation requires at least 250 mm of rain per year. The limit of agriculture unsupported by irrigation runs approximately sixty kilometres east of the limestone massif. Except for some natural oases, the land to the east of that line can only be exploited for grazing. But when Syria became part of the Roman Empire nomadic grazing seems to have been the dominant land-use much further west.⁸

4 Konrad 2001, op. cit. (n. 3), 109.

5 Konrad 2001, op. cit. (n. 3), 104–105: garrison of Qusair as-Saila 60–100. The Diocletianic forts at Lejjun and Udruh in Jordan are c. 242 m × 190 meters, and might have had room for 1000 or 1500 men. This may well have been the size of the North Syrian legions, cf. J. Lander and S.T. Parker, 'Legio IV *Martia* and the legionary camp at El-Lejjūn', *Byzantinische Forschungen* 8 (1982), 185–210; Udruh: A. Killick, *Udruh, Caravan City and Desert Oasis* (Romsey 1987).

6 Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 5.19 (81–82); 21 (88–90). On Pliny's account see A.H.M. Jones, *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces* (Oxford 1971, 2nd ed.), 260–262; J.D. Grainger, *The Cities of Seleukid Syria* (Oxford 1990), 184–187; map 4 (p. 234).

7 Grainger 1990, op. cit. (n. 6), 234, map 4, lists from north to south: Gazetae, Gindareni (around Gindarus), Rhambaei, Tardytenses, Hylatae (around Raphanea), Samsigerami (around Emesa), cf. Jones 1971, op. cit. (n. 6), 262–263.

8 This also suggested by Strabo 16.2.11 (probably based on Posidonius (135–51 BC), a native of Apamea on the Orontes).

The distinction between nomads and peasants is not nearly as sharp as has formerly been believed. The pastoral and agricultural ways of life can be combined in a wide variety of ways. The two ways of life are indeed mutually dependent, each providing the other with items that it cannot produce itself.⁹ It follows that peasants and nomads can, and normally do coexist peacefully.¹⁰ On the other hand the coexistence of nomadic and sedentary ways of life does involve competition for the use of the same resources of land and water, and therefore produces many occasions for conflict. To keep the situation stable requires agreements, treaties, policing, and combined effort by both parties to prevent the intrusion, whether for grazing or for plunder, of new and unwanted migrants from the desert.¹¹

We know very little about the Syrian and Arabian nomads of the first century AD. For the later period we know more about the nomads in southern than in northern Syria.¹² But nomads were probably never very far from the sedentary areas, and some nomadic groups had a permanent sedentary base. We are told that in the mid fifth century, Simon Stylites on his column, standing in an area already dotted with villages, was nevertheless frequently visited by nomads, both by individuals and by large tribal groups with their camels.¹³ In the sixth century the Ghassanids were settled in Syria, and cooperated with the empire in keeping out other groups,¹⁴ but presumably continued their nomadic migrations.

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- 9 R. Cribb, *Nomads in Archaeology* (Cambridge 1991), 23–43 discusses the integration of pastoralism and agriculture; M. Rowton, 'Dimorphic structure and topology', *Oriens Antiquus* 15 (1976), 17–31; Th. Brüggemann, 'Nundinae als Bindeglied zwischen römischer Administration und indigener Gesellschaften im antiken Nordafrika', in B. Streck, ed., *Segmentation und Komplementarität. Organisatorische ökonomische und kulturelle Aspekte der Interaktion von Nomaden und Sesshaften* (Halle 2004), 157–187.
 - 10 D.F. Graf, 'Rome and the Saracens: reassessing the nomadic menace', in Idem, *Rome and the Arabian Frontier from the Nabataeans to the Saracens* (Aldershot 1997), no. ix.
 - 11 M. Sartre, 'Les nomads et l'empire en Arabie', in Idem, *Trois études sur l'Arabie romaine et byzantine* (Brussels 1982), 121–203.
 - 12 M.C.A. MacDonald, 'Nomads and the Hawran in the Late Hellenistic and Roman periods', *Syria* 70 (1993), 303–404; M. Sartre, 'Transhumance, économie et société de montagne en Syrie du sud', *Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes* 41 (1997), 75–86; H. Zeinaddin, 'Safaitische Inschriften aus dem Gabal al'Arab', *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 12 (2000), 265–289; Idem, 'Tribus et clans dans l'Hauran antique', *Syria* 59 (1982), 77–79.
 - 13 Theodoret, *Historia Religiosa* 26.13–15.
 - 14 On the settlements of the Ghassanids see Sartre 1982, op. cit. (n. 11), 177–188.

The Inscriptions of Northern Syria as Evidence for Rural Change

The reconstruction of the social and economic development of Syria under Roman rule has so far largely depended on inscriptions, which are abundant, and an unusually high proportion of which is dated. The inscriptions of Northern Syria have been collected in IGLS.¹⁵ We are therefore in a position to date and map changes in the population of the North Syrian countryside, at least as far as these are reflected in epigraphic commemoration.

The interpretation of the epigraphic evidence however is not quite straightforward. Whether we have inscriptions from a particular ancient site depends on numerous chance accidents of survival and recovery. Whether or not inscribed monuments were erected at all was conditional on the population having adopted what ancient historians call the 'epigraphic habit'. Moreover, our period saw not only the adoption of the epigraphic habit, but also a subsequent change in its use. Under the Early Empire people putting up inscriptions were asserting their Hellenisation, that is their identification with the culture of the empire.¹⁶ But under the Later Empire inscriptions to an increasing extent displayed Christian piety. The great increase in the number of inscriptions in the fifth as compared with the fourth century was probably not only due to an increase in population, but also to deeper Christianisation. It is also possible that the plague and invasion of the mid-sixth century led to an increase in piety, which in turn produced an increase in epigraphic display. Detailed study of the impact of the army is hindered by the fact that the number of military inscriptions from northern Syria, including the military sites mentioned in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, is remarkably small.¹⁷ Funerary monuments of soldiers are much scarcer than one would expect in a well-garrisoned province.

If we assume that increases and decreases in epigraphic commemoration in the countryside directly reflect the growth and decline of rural population, we must conclude that growth started slowly in the first century AD, accelerated in the second, slowed down in the third, only to resume in the fourth century

15 IGLS 2 and 4, which between them have the bulk of the inscriptions from the massif, date from 1939 and 1955; I. Pena, P. Castellana and R. Fernandez, *Inventaire du Jebel Barich* (Milan 1987); Idem, *Inventaire du Jebel El A'la* (Milan 1990); Idem, *Inventaire du Jébel Wastani* (Milan 1999), up-date archaeological information about these areas, particularly of post Roman remains, but have little new epigraphy.

16 H. Cotton, 'Die Papyrusdokumente aus der jüdischen Wüste und ihr Beitrag zur Erforschung der jüdischen Geschichte des 1. und 2. Jhs. n. Chr', *Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 115.2 (1999), 228–247, esp. 235–237.

17 Even excavation has produced very few inscriptions; see e.g. the excavation report Konrad 2001, op. cit. (n. 3).

and to continue at an accelerating rate to the middle of the sixth century. From then decline set in. The production of inscriptions ceased almost completely after 600.¹⁸

The Spreading of the Epigraphic Habit in Northern Syria and its Social Implications

1 *The Cities*

The earliest inscriptions are found in the cities along the Orontes, Seleuceia,¹⁹ Antioch,²⁰ Apamea,²¹ Epiphania (Hama), Emesa²² Raphanea²³ and Salamia, and in the inland cities of Chalcis,²⁴ Beroea,²⁵ also at the coastal city of Laodicea,²⁶ at Cyrrhus, situated on the route from Antioch to Zeugma on the Euphrates,²⁷ and at Palmyra, the oasis city on the edge of the Arabian desert. At Seleuceia, Antioch, and Laodicea inscriptions go back to the Hellenistic period. At Palmyra they begin in the reign of Augustus.²⁸ At Palmyra alone the epigraphic habit was not entirely classical. The Palmyrenes adopted the Greek types of monument for public buildings, and honorific commemoration of the living or the dead, but often used their own local Semitic language for the inscribed text.

18 See the graphs in G. Tate, *Les campagnes de la Syrie du Nord du II^e au VII^e siècle: un exemple d'expansion démographique et économique à la fin de l'antiquité* (Paris 1992), 174–176, and more understandably in the table (based on the graphs) in M. Bradley, *Seleucos-Belos: a lost Macedonian foundation in the Limestone massif of North Syria* (Burford 2002), 39.

19 Site deserted: earliest dated inscription *IGLS* 1184, of 187–175 BC.

20 Continuously inhabited, one major excavation. Earliest dated inscription *IGLS* 1071 and 1071, of 212/11 and 194/3 BC.

21 Site deserted, major excavations. Earliest dated inscription *IGLS* 1368, of AD 134?

22 Continuously inhabited, major excavations. P.-L. Gatier, 'Palmyre et Émèse ou Émèse sans Palmyre', *Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes* 42 (1996), 431–436.

23 Deserted since Crusades: R. Dussaud, *Topographie historique de la Syrie antique et médiévale* (Paris 1927), 98–99.

24 Deserted, not excavated. Earliest dated inscription *IGLS* 280, of AD 242–243.

25 Continuously inhabited.

26 Continuously inhabited, not excavated. Earliest inscription *IGLS* 1261, of 174 BC.

27 Deserted, a little archaeology. References in Millar 1993, op. cit. (n. 2), 229 n. 15.

28 Deserted, major excavations. Earliest Palmyrene inscription 34/33BC, (from Dura, references in Millar 1993, op. cit. (n. 2), 114–115, n. 16. The earliest inscription at Palmyra itself dates from 44–43 BC; J. Cantineau et al., *Inventaire des inscriptions de Palmyre* (1930–), XI, no. 100; J. Starcky and M. Gawlikowski, *Palmyre* (Paris 1985); M. Gawlikowski, *Recueil d'inscriptions palmyréniennes provenant de fouilles syriennes et polonaises récentes à Palmyre* (Paris 1974).

There are also numerous Greek and bilingual inscriptions. The architecture of the city, especially that of its colonnaded streets was strongly influenced by the architecture of Greco-Roman cities, though the layout of the city, the design of its principal temple, the city's art display, and above all its religion, show many features that are neither Greek nor Roman.²⁹ Palmyra probably originated as a confederation of Arab tribes,³⁰ and has a long, very obscure pre-Roman history. The Bible (certainly wrongly) attributes its foundation to Solomon.³¹ Its transformation into something that looked very much like a Greco-Roman city was closely linked to the establishment of the Hellenistic kingdoms. A geophysical survey combined with trial soundings has traced streets going back to Hellenistic times south of the spectacular monumental area.³² The main street is aligned with the road to Emesa. The oldest remains still visible go back to the time of Augustus. The city appears to have acquired a Greek type constitution, with council and magistrates,³³ in the Roman period.³⁴

Palmyra is situated on an oasis, "famous for the richness of its soil and for its agreeable springs".³⁵ In the years of its greatness, which is the best known part of its history, the city's leading families were active in the caravan trade across the Arabian desert.³⁶

It would appear that the peculiar geographical and political situation of Palmyra was a very important factor in the development of north eastern Syria under the early Empire. For by the reign of Tiberius Palmyra was a client state of the Empire,³⁷ and subsequently the city became increasingly closely integrated into the Empire while retaining its own military capacity. Palmyrene forces played a leading part in guarding the road from the city to Soura on the

29 Millar 1993, op. cit. (n. 2), 329–338.

30 Aramaic was used on inscriptions, while many Palmyrene personal names and some of deities are Arabic. See M. Gawlikowski, 'The Syrian desert under the Romans', in S.E. Alcock, ed., *The Early Roman Empire in the East* (Oxford 1997), 37–54 esp. 42.

31 2 *Chronicles* 8.4.

32 A. Schmidt-Colinet and Kh. al-As'ad, 'Zur Urbanistik des hellenistischen Palmyra', *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 12 (2000), 61–93. We still know nothing about the site before Hellenistic times.

33 Millar 1993, op. cit. (n. 2), 321–325.

34 J.F. Matthews, 'The tax law of Palmyra', *Journal of Roman Studies* 74 (1984), 15–180, esp. 174.

35 Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 5.21 (88).

36 E. Will, 'Marchands et chefs de caravans à Palmyre de Syrie', *Syria* 34 (1957), 77–91; M. Gawlikowski, 'Palmyre et l'Euphrate', *Syria* 60 (1973), 53–68; J.-B. Yon, *Les notables de Palmyre* (Beirut 2002).

37 Millar 1993, op. cit. (n. 2), 34–35.

Euphrates,³⁸ which was one of several routes used by the Palmyrene caravans.³⁹ Both the city's military cooperation with the Empire, and its long-distance trade depended on a good and secure road system. The need to guard the roads drew the Roman army into the steppe region, and by the reign of Vespasian Palmyra was fully integrated in the system of Roman military roads.⁴⁰ Users of the road whether soldiers, officials, or traders needed road stations where they might obtain food and water, relays of draught animals, and hospitality for the night, and also military escorts.⁴¹ It is likely that such road stations provided nuclei for the subsequent development of the steppe region, and the sedentarisation of its population.⁴²

2 *The Limestone Massif*

In the countryside of northern Syria the earliest inscriptions come from the limestone massif to the east of Antioch. On the two ranges north of the Antioch Beroea road, the Gebel Sim'an and the Gebel Halaqa, the earliest inscription dates from before 61 AD, and commemorates the building of part of the perimeter wall and portico of the temple of Zeus Madbachos on Gebel Sheikh Barakat. Eight inscriptions commemorate the completion of sections of this work by different individuals between 61 and 119–120 AD. The classical and monumental temple must have been built for the population of the area.⁴³ But we have no other evidence about these people, how they lived or made their living. From the second century IGLS has 6 dated inscriptions from 5 locations other than that of the temple. The third century contributes 8 inscriptions, 7 of them from new locations, the fourth 14 inscriptions, including 8 from new locations, the fifth 38, including 19 from new locations. There are 21 inscriptions from the sixth century.

38 Ibidem 133–135. At the same time there were Roman units at Palmyra itself, Ibidem 108; 135.

39 M. Gawlikowski, 'Palmyra and its caravan trade', *Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes* 42 (1996), 137–145; E. Will, 'Palmyre et la route de la soie', Ibidem 125–128.

40 Ibidem 83–84: Roman milestone of 75 AD 27 km north of Palmyra on the road to the Euphrates, another of the same year 75 miles east of Apamea on the road to Palmyra.

41 IGLS 27041: count Silvinus creates an oasis and fort to assist travellers (late 4th c?).

42 Cf. p. 435 below. That forts were established to protect communications before there was much sedentary population to protect in the Negev seems well established. See T.E. Gini and Y. Israel, 'Recent advances in research of the Nabatean and Roman Negev', in R. Rosenthal-Heginbottom, ed., *The Nabateans in the Negev* (Haifa 2003), 9–14.

43 Millar 1993, op. cit. (n. 2), 254: Temenos: 68 m × 68 m, temple: 11 m × 20 m.

Apart from the inscriptions of the temple of Zeus Mabachos, the earliest inscriptions on the massif come from funerary monuments.⁴⁴ Clusters of such inscriptions have been found especially in the neighbourhood of temples.⁴⁵ Judging by the location of the earliest inscriptions, settlement on both the Gebel Sem'an and on the Gebel Barisa grew up relatively close to what was perhaps the most important road in northern Syria, the road of which one branch links Antioch to Beroea, Hierapolis and the Euphrates, and another runs south-east to Chalkis and then south-east to Palmyra. The inscriptions are always Greek. Some of the names of the individuals commemorated are Greek too, but many are Semitic. In the course of time Semitic names become rarer. The architecture of the temples as far as we can tell from the ruins was classical, and even Roman rather than Greek, but the gods, as far as we can tell, were local 'semitic' deities who have been identified with Greek gods.

Just to the south of the Gebel Sem'an, on the Gebel Barisa, the pattern of early inscriptions is very similar. Here the earliest inscription dates from 129 AD. Seven date from the second century, only one from the third, seventeen from the fourth, 19 from the fifth, and thirteen from the sixth, the majority from the first half. Here too the earliest inscriptions cluster around temples, though in the great majority of cases we do not know the name of the god worshipped.⁴⁶ Here too the earliest settlements lie on the side of the ridge most easily accessible from the great road linking Antioch to Beroea and the Euphrates. It is worth noting that Me'ez, the ancient Ikhkhénis, the most important centre on the Gebel Barisa, seems to have been laid out in the second century on a regular plan with an agora. In this it is unlike any other settlement on the massif.⁴⁷

Further south on the Gebel Zawiye the inscriptional habit and the social developments implied by it seem to have occurred significantly later. The earliest inscription in IGLS 4 from this ridge dates from 177–178. There are only two inscriptions from the second century, and the same number from the third. Development only really gets going in the fourth century, which has produced

44 Of second century inscriptions on the entire massif 23 come from tombs, 10 from temples, and 8 from reused blocks, none was on part of a house.

45 Tate 1992, op. cit. (n. 18) 278, fig. 281.

46 The exception is the temple of Zeus of the Altar (= Zeus Bomos, Zeus Madbachos) at Borg Baquirha, see Pena, Castellana and Fernandez 1987, op. cit. (n. 15), 79.

47 G. Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord*, 3 vols. (Paris 1953–1955) I, 280–281; R.M. Bradfield, *Seleucos-Belos: a lost Macedonian foundation in the Limestone massif of North Syria* (Burford 2002) has argued that the site was that of the Seleucid foundation Seleucos Belos, whose site is still uncertain though it is generally thought to have been in the valley of the Orontes.

eleven inscriptions, and in the fifth which has produced ten. The sixth century has only produced five. These villages are in the territory of Apamea, which was of course a less important centre than Antioch, and the earliest inscriptions on the Gebel Zawiye have been found along the southern tip of the ridge to the west of the Chalcis-Apamea road, which was certainly much less important than the road from Antioch to Beroea.

After some very detailed examination of the remains on the massif, George Tate has devised a system of dating of buildings, which is based on a chronology of changes in building technique and style of ornament. His conclusions suggest that if we rely exclusively on epigraphic evidence, we will significantly underestimate the scale of building activity in the second and early third centuries.⁴⁸ Dating by style is of course less reliable than dating by dated inscriptions, but such as it is it fully confirms the long period of expansion from the fourth to the mid sixth century.

How did this expansion come about? It is significant that when the inscriptional evidence begins, even though the inscriptions are in Greek, the villages appear to have Semitic names. This suggests that the villages predate Hellenisation and the 'epigraphic habit'. Some of the names commemorated on funerary monuments are Semitic too. On others the deceased has a Greek name while his father's name is still Semitic. I am not an Arabist and cannot distinguish Arabic from Aramaic. The distinction is of course important when we try to establish the origin of the settlers. But whether the settlers came from the Aramaic west, or the Arabic east,⁴⁹ the fact that the names are not Greek shows that the area was originally populated by settlers who were not Greeks. The individuals whose tombs or houses are inscribed in Greek therefore represent an elite, of largely Semitic origin, which has adopted Greek for its monumental display. We know practically nothing about the ordinary villagers or about their relationship to this elite.

There is indeed very little evidence about the social structure of these villages. There are a few references to estates.⁵⁰ But there is little to support

48 Tate 1992, op. cit. (n. 18), 277–285.

49 R. Dussaud, *La pénétration des Arabes en Syrie avant l'Islam* (Paris 1955); H. Gaube, 'Arabs in sixth century Syria: some archaeological observations', in M.A. Bakhit, ed., *Proceedings of the First International Conference on Bilad al Sham, 20–25 April 1974* (Amman 1984), 61–66.

50 See Tchalenko 1953–1955, op. cit. (n. 47) III, 9–10; Tate 1992, op. cit. (n. 18), 213 on so-called ἐποίκια at Baziher (*SEG* 20, no. 339), Ferkan (*SEG* 20, no. 342), Sekla, south of Hama (*CIL* 5.8730) and *IGLS* 1382: κώμης Μαάρχης ἐπυκίου (neighbourhood of Apamea). See also D. Feissel, 'Remarques de toponymie syrienne', *Syria* 59 (1982), 319ff.; P. Sarris,

the view that the Hellenised elite were great landowners, and that the bulk of the villagers were their tenants and dependants, though this may well have sometimes been the case. Both tombs and houses differ considerably in size, and in the amount and quality of their architectural ornament.⁵¹ There are no mansions comparable to the great villas in the West, but the villagers were obviously of very unequal wealth.⁵² But this by itself does not tell us anything about the structures of landowning and dependency. The very slow progress of the construction of the circuit wall and portico of the temple on Gebel Sheikh Barakat suggests that the wealthy villagers who paid for the building were wealthy only relatively to their fellow villagers.⁵³ We have no direct evidence that any of the land belonged to absentee landlords living at Antioch or Apamea,⁵⁴ though it is of course likely, that some of the land did. Debt, then as now, would drive independent peasants into dependence on absentee landlords.

Of the 30 tomb inscriptions from the massif up to 330 AD, eight are veterans of the Roman army.⁵⁵ This is a significant proportion, but nothing like enough to suggest that there had been systematic settlement of veterans,⁵⁶ though it does show that veterans were included in the village elite. Out of these burials ten have at least one Latin name.⁵⁷ In addition to becoming Hellenised, members of the local elite were also adapting aspects of specifically Roman culture.

Economy and Society in the Age of Justinian (Cambridge 2006), *passim*, argues that ἐποικίαι (in Egypt) were settlements of estate workers.

- 51 Tate 1992, op. cit. (n. 18), 292–293; Tchalenko 1953–1955, op. cit. (n. 47) II, plates LXI, LXII.
- 52 Early large houses ('villas' according to Tchalenko) at Bamuqqa (Tchalenko 1953–1955, op. cit. (n. 47) I, 312), Behyo (ibidem 352), Refade (ibidem 194), Qirquize (ibidem 323), Benebil (Tate 1992, op. cit. (n. 18), 35–39). But whether these early well-built houses, which are in type very similar to less well-built smaller houses, were really the original core of the development of the limestone massif is doubtful. See Tate 1992, op. cit. (n. 18), 291–294. If they were built by landowners, these were not big landowners. Many (not those just mentioned) houses of many rooms on the massif became so only by later enlargement (Tate 1992, op. cit. (n. 18), 39–41).
- 53 In AD 109 Gaios Valerius Procolos, a Roman citizen, gave 1986 drachmae (*IGLS* 468).
- 54 Against the view of P. Horden and N. Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: a study of Mediterranean history* (Oxford 2000), 274–275.
- 55 Tate 1992, op. cit. (n. 18), 291.
- 56 Pena, Castellana and Fernandez 1999, op. cit. (n. 15), 15–16 states that there was large-scale settlement of veterans in this region. The information given in that survey is insufficient to assess whether this is correct or not.
- 57 Tate 1992, op. cit. (n. 18), 292.

The nature of the land, irregular patches of cultivable soil, separated by areas of rocky outcrops,⁵⁸ is not suitable for organised mass settlement. Furthermore the villages on the crests and in the internal plains of the massif⁵⁹ are most easily accessible from the east.⁶⁰ These two factors make it likely that the massif was first settled by individuals, or small groups, coming from the steppe region to the east, who first built a temporary shelter on a patch of cultivable soil, and began to cultivate it. In fact the process of settlement in Antiquity may well have been very much like the process of resettlement that is taking place in our own time.⁶¹ Alternatively (or additionally) larger bands of nomads might have chosen land on the massif to make a sedentary base for their annual migrations.

This does not however appear to be the whole story. There is one very striking and widespread body of evidence that is not compatible with a theory of colonisation by squatters. In many areas the land is divided by parallel of ridges of heaped-up stones. These stretch for miles in more or less straight lines, ignoring physical features.⁶² They are found on the north and east of the Gebel Sem'an,⁶³ and continue beyond the ridge across the plain of Dana.⁶⁴ They are found on the Gebel Halaqa, and in the south of the Gebel Barisa. The dividing ridges are well preserved in the north of the Gebel Zawiye, especially around Sinsarah and Sergilla.⁶⁵ There are none on the Gebel Ala, or in the north of the Gebel Barisa. The land-divisions of the massif seem to continue into the plain of Chalcis.⁶⁶ Similar systems have been found on the Gebel Hass⁶⁷ and the

58 Tchalenko 1953–1955, op. cit. (n. 47) I, 184–187.

59 See Tchalenko 1953–1955, op. cit. (n. 47) II, pls. LV, LVII (plans of plain Qatura), pls. LVIII–LX, LXIII–LXV plans of settlements. The villages around this plain have produced the earliest inscriptions in the Gebel Sim'an.

60 Tchalenko 1953–1955, op. cit. (n. 47) I, 60–81.

61 Tchalenko 1953–1955, op. cit. (n. 47) I, 77–78; 100–102; 185–187; II, pl.

62 G. Tate, 'À propos des cadastres romains du nord de la Syrie', in P.N. Doukellis and L.G. Mendoni, eds., *Structures rurales et sociétés antiques* (Besançon 1994), 443–451; Tate 1992, op. cit. (n. 18), 230–239.

63 See Tchalenko 1953–1955, op. cit. (n. 47) II, pl. XLVII (Telade), XLVIII, LI (Turmanin), cxxx (Seih Sliman), LXIX (aerial photograph of Seih Sliman).

64 Tchalenko 1953–1955, op. cit. (n. 47) II, pl. LXI.

65 Tate 1992, op. cit. (n. 18), 233; figs. 267, 268 and 273 (Gerade).

66 Tate 1992, op. cit. (n. 18), 234; figs. 269, 270, 271.

67 Ibidem, figs. 274, 275.

Gebel Sbeit much further east, and also around Emesa⁶⁸ in the Orontes plain, but not so far in the plain of Antioch.⁶⁹

The ridges are about 100 meters apart, sometimes less, so that they divide the landscape into very long strips of land. They are subdivided by cross-walls into field-shaped areas. The distances between walls do not appear to correspond to those of Roman centuriation. The system is certainly man-made. Moreover the divisions are so regular, and so extensive, that their construction must have involved a collective effort, and the backing, or more likely the command, of a powerful authority. The cities of Antioch and Apamea, in whose territories the villages are situated, could have organised these land divisions, more likely the imperial administration.⁷⁰ It has been suggested that much of the land was imperial property, and that the imperial administrators encouraged tenants to take up cultivation, and particularly to plant olive trees by privileging them in something like the way African tenants were privileged by the *lex Manciana*.⁷¹ Sometimes two or more systems of land division seem to have been super-imposed. So the system may well have undergone considerable change in the course of its history. These systems of land division have yet to be mapped. A few photographs show villages whose street plan seems not to be related to the lines of the field divisions. Does this mean that the divisions are older than the villages?⁷² Once the system has been mapped, it may be possible to date the divisions and formulate theories as to when, and by whom, and for what purpose they were created.

As far as the evidence of inscriptions goes, the development of our region began to go into reverse in the middle of the sixth century, after the plague of 542 and the Persian invasion and accompanying deportations. The setting up of inscriptions seems to have ceased quite abruptly around 600. This surprising fact can be convincingly linked with the end of the Roman organisation of

68 W.J. van Liere, 'Ager centuriatus of the Roman colony of Emesa (Homs)', *Annales Archéologiques de la Syrie* 8–9 (1958–59), 55–58.

69 The foundation of Antioch itself seems to have been preceded by the setting out of a grid of rectangular land divisions: J. Leblanc and G. Poccardi, 'Étude de la permanence de traces urbains et ruraux antiques à Antioche-sur-l'Oronte', *Syria* 76 (1999), 91–110.

70 Divisions run without break over the boundary between the territories of Apamea and Antioch. There was a large imperial estate between Bab el Hawa (on the plain of Dana) and Qasr el Banat (to the north-west of the road to Antioch (Tchalenko 1953–1955, op. cit. (n. 47) I, 393–94 on *IGLS* 528 and 530.

71 Tate 1992, op. cit. (n. 18), 298–299; Tchalenko 1953–1955, op. cit. (n. 47) I, 414–417.

72 Tate suggests that in their present form they may only go back to a time when the villages were already abandoned, that is the 8th or 9th centuries: G. Tate, 'The Syrian countryside during the Roman era', in Alcock 1997, op. cit. (n. 30) 55–71, esp. 60.

Syria, as a result of the Persian invasion and occupation, soon to be followed by the Arab conquest. However these events did not result in immediate depopulation. The decline of the villages, and the death of so many of them, was certainly a very gradual process. There is evidence of medieval occupation at a significant number of sites. But early Islamic architecture is conspicuously absent. The inscriptions of the seventh-tenth century are few, and mainly in Syriac.⁷³ More excavation is needed.⁷⁴

3 *The Basalt Hills and the Desert Fringe*

In the early empire, according to the Elder Pliny and Strabo the dividing line between nomads and sedentary peasants ran to the east of the territories of the cities Emesa, Raphanea, Apamea, then east of the limestone Massif, and the fertile⁷⁵ territories of the cities of Chalcis and Beroea, to the Euphrates.⁷⁶ But by the end of the fifth century the limits of agriculture had moved between fifty and a hundred kilometres further east. Cultivation now extended as far as annual rainfall allowed,⁷⁷ and in many places beyond that, on man-made oases far out in the desert.⁷⁸ Today the whole area is covered with remains of stone-built settlements, some small, some large, with churches and monasteries, and numerous irrigation schemes.

The evidence bearing on the causes of this astonishing development is uneven. Very many sites have yielded no inscriptions at all. Inscriptions start in the second century. Their frequency increases slowly during the third and fourth centuries, but they become really abundant, and begin to cover the whole area, only in the fifth and sixth centuries.⁷⁹ Inscriptions occur in

73 F.R. Trombley, 'Demographic and cultural transition in the territory of Antioch, 6th to 8th centuries', *Topoi: Orient Occident. Supplément* 5 (2004), 341–362 on p. 357 lists 18 inscriptions.

74 J.-P. Sodini et al., 'Déhès (Syrie du Nord): campagnes I–III (1977–1978)', *Syria* 57 (1980), 1–304.

75 Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 5.81.

76 K. Butcher, *Roman Syria and the Near East* (London 2003), 153–155; Millar 1993, op. cit. (n. 2), 238–239 on Strabo 16.2.10; Diodorus, 33.4a.

77 A. Poidebard and R. Mouterde, *Le "limes" de Chalcis et le route d'Antioche à Palmyre* (Beirut 1939), 14; carte II.

78 G.M. Schwartz et al., 'Excavations and survey in the Jabbul Plain, Eastern Syria: The Umm el-Marra project 1996–97', *American Journal of Archaeology* 104 (2000), 419–462.

79 Tate 1992, op. cit. (n. 18), 346 for basalt area: before 300: 8, fourth century 13, fifth century 41, sixth century 88, after 600: 2.

clusters, and particularly on the Gebel Hass,⁸⁰ beside the lake Gabbula,⁸¹ and on the Gebel Sbeyt.⁸² Many inscriptions have also been found in the basalt area to the east of Ma'arrat No'man, between the large settlements at Taroutia and Androna;⁸³ and further south, around the road from Apamea to Palmyra.⁸⁴ In the later fifth and early sixth century some of the settlements became small towns, with a circuit-wall, a citadel and several churches. Anasarthā, Gabbula and Sergiopolis even achieved city status and became seats of bishops.

The inscriptions have little or nothing to do with soldiers or the Roman army. They record civilian building and the burial of civilians. Recent survey work has shown that in the area beyond the 250 mm rain line many of the sites that Poidebard and Mouterde had classified as military were in fact not military at all, but farms, large or small, or even shelters of nomads. Ceramic evidence suggests that there were scarcely any sedentary settlements (other than road stations) in this zone before the fifth and sixth centuries. But in those two centuries the desert fringe came to be exploited wherever irrigation could be provided. The nature of the exploitation depended on the extent of irrigation. In natural or artificial oases agriculture was possible.⁸⁵ Some farms seem to have been designed for animal rearing, others for mixed farming. Even on this desert fringe nomads sometimes coexisted with sedentary farmers.⁸⁶

Inscriptions suggest that the earliest settlements were linked to the road system. From the early second century Roman control was advanced east along the Euphrates as far as Sura or Callinicum.⁸⁷ The defence of that region, and of the desert flank of the Syrian provinces, was shared out between Roman forces and those of the client state of Palmyra. In addition to the needs of traders, military considerations therefore now required good communications between the cities of north-western Syria with Palmyra.⁸⁸ Not surprisingly the earliest

80 *IGLS* 270–230; 322–354.

81 *Ibidem*, 259–269.

82 *Ibidem*, 302–321.

83 *Ibidem*, 1542–1713, Androna is a *mansio* on Antonine itinerary.

84 *Ibidem*, 1841–1997.

85 Poidebard and Mouterde 1939, *op. cit.* (n. 77), 14; plan II; also 13–16; 110–111; 112–113; 118–136; 207–208; 333–349; Butcher 2003, *op. cit.* (n. 76), 154; Y. Calvet and B. Geyer, *Barrages antiques de la Syrie* (Lyon 1992).

86 B. Geyer, 'Des fermes byzantines aux palais omayyades, ou l'ingénieuse mise en valeur des plaines steppiques de Chalcidique', in L. Nordiguian and J.-F. Salles, eds., *Aux origines de l'archéologie aérienne: A. Poidebard (1878–1955)* (Beirut 2000), 109–122.

87 Millar 1993, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 83.

88 A monument where the road from Apamea enters Palmyrene territory at Bir Gihar, 43 km from Palmyra, was erected by the Roman governor Creticus Silanus in 11–17 AD, repaired

inscriptions of the steppe region have been found in the neighbourhood of the road running across the steppe from Antioch via Chalcis to Palmyra, and among a network of roads linking Apamea, with Epiphania (Hama), Raphanea (legionary station) and Emesa, and all these cities with Palmyra. As Roman control of Mesopotamia moved east, the Romans developed military routes across the steppe.⁸⁹ While previously Roman armies had marched via Gindarus to Zeugma on the Euphrates, they now found it more practical to cross the limestone massif along the Antioch-Chalcis road, and then branching off at Literba, to reach the Euphrates via Hierapolis.⁹⁰ Subsequently, the resumed forward movement under Diocletian increased the military importance of the route through the desert from Palmyra to Sura on the Euphrates. Settlement in support of road traffic preceded, and led, settlement in the region as a whole.

The southern steppe region has produced a remarkably large number of inscriptions from the second half of the 6th century, when the epigraphic habit on the limestone massif was already in decline. It may be that after the Persian invasion population and wealth moved into areas that had not been damaged, and were less exposed to Persian raids. But here too, inscriptions came to an abrupt end after 600, and again it is certain that the end of the epigraphic habit did not signal depopulation. Excavation has shown that the *vicus* at Qusair as-Saila was populated long after the evacuation of the fort in the 580s, and well into the Umayyad period.⁹¹ Indeed the Umayyads seem to have continued the development of the desert fringe, with a few large-scale developments.⁹²

To sum up: The location of the earliest inscriptions suggests that settlement developed around the road system, and that many, perhaps most, of the early sites were primarily road stations. The frontier troops needed civilian support. Diocletian and his immediate successors established a continuous

by Trajan in 103, and once more by Antoninus Pius in 153 AD (Poidebard and Mouterde 1939, op. cit. (n. 77), 59). Another early boundary stone marks the border between Roman and Palmyrene territory at Qasr el Hair sixty km south-south west from Palmyra on the road to Damascus (*L'Année Epigraphique* 1939 no. 180). Corbulo had already grasped the solution to basic strategical problem of operations in the steppe region: Tacitus, *Annales* 15.3: *hostilis ingressus praesidiis intercipit; et quia egena aquarum regio est, castella fontibus imposita*.

89 P. Thomsen, 'Die römischen Meilensteine', *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 40 (1917) 1–103, relevant nos. 24 and 34.

90 N. Kramer, *Gindaros, Geschichte und Archäologie einer Siedlung im nord westlichen Syrien* (Düsseldorf 2004), 340–342.

91 Konrad 2001, op. cit. (n. 3), 146 (coins). In Umayyad times a monastery occupied the interior of the abandoned fort (ibidem 64–67).

92 B. Geyer 2000, op. cit. (n. 86).

line of major and minor forts along the *limes*, and he stationed cavalry units in a number of locations some distance behind the frontier. Even if the total number of men involved was not much over 10,000,⁹³ they will have required corn and infrastructure, and their pay will have provided purchasing power. The excavation at Qusair as-Saila (Tetrapurgium) south of Resafa, on the *limes* road to Palmyra, has shown that the civilian *vicus* was constructed and fortified at the same time as the fortress.

At the same time the increase in the number of settlements, above all in the fifth and sixth centuries, cannot be explained solely in terms of the need of the army. Late Antiquity surely saw a very considerable growth in the population of the northern Syria, as in much of the Near East. The growing population first spread into the limestone massif. As the massif became saturated, increasing numbers in search of land settled in land further east. Settlers did not come from the west only. The population of Arabia too was growing beyond the limits of what that dry land could support.⁹⁴ Overpopulation drove the great conquests followed by settlement in the seventh century. But over-population in Arabia had stimulated immigration into the border regions of the Roman East, and not least into the steppe of Northern Syria long before the Islamic invasion.⁹⁵

Intensification and Abatement

Purcell and Horden have recently pointed out that change in the human exploitation of the countryside tends to be cyclical, with a phase of what they call intensification followed by one of abatement, and that these cycles are drawn out over many centuries.⁹⁶ As far as Syria is concerned recent surveys around Lake Gabboula have shown that cycles of this kind can be traced back as far as the third millennium BC.⁹⁷ In the basalt region, surveyed by J. Lassus, the

93 See above n. 5.

94 Gaube 1984, op. cit. (n. 49), 61–66.

95 G. Tate, 'Le problème de la défense et du peuplement de la steppe au Syrie du nord entre la chute de Palmyre et le règne de Justinien', *Annales d'Archéologie Arabe Syrienne* 42 (1996), 33–37.

96 Horden and Purcell 2000, op. cit. (n. 55) *passim*.

97 G.M.S. Schwartz et al., 'Elite tomb and other evidence from Tell Umm el Mara, Syria', *American Journal of Archaeology* 117 (2003), 325–361; Idem, 'Excavation and survey in the Jabbul plain, western Syria: the Umm el-Mara project', *American Journal of Archaeology* 104 (2000), 419–462. See also P.M.M.G. Akkermans and G.M. Schwartz, *The Archaeology*

presence of numerous tells provides similar evidence of dense occupation at the beginning of the first millennium BC.⁹⁸ The plain of Antioch too has numerous tells which were abandoned by the Hellenistic period.⁹⁹ When Alexander the Great conquered Syria in 333 BC, Northern Syria seems to have been at the nadir of a phase of abatement,¹⁰⁰ and to have had few settlements that could be described as towns, and little sedentary agriculture. A phase of intensification began with the establishment of military settlements by Seleucus Nikator after 301.¹⁰¹ Some were new foundations, others were enlarged existing settlements.¹⁰² The royal foundations were populated largely by Greek settlers.¹⁰³ All duly developed into Greek type cities.¹⁰⁴ The official language of the kingdoms was Greek, as was the language and culture of the civic leaders. Socially ambitious individuals of local descent adopted Greek names and Greek Language.¹⁰⁵ Local gods were assimilated to deities of the Greek pantheon. The establishment of cities led to wider changes. Agriculture expanded to feed the cities.¹⁰⁶ A road system began to link the cities.¹⁰⁷ Two large artificial harbours were created at Seleuceia and Laodicea respectively.¹⁰⁸ The disturbed conditions following the break-up of the Seleucid kingdom set urbanisation and Hellenisation into reverse.

Under Roman rule intensification resumed. There was a major demographic expansion into the steppe lands as direct result of the incorporation of the area in the Roman system. The development can be mapped from the

of Syria: from complex Hunter-Gatherers to Early Urban Societies (c. 16,000–300 BC) (Cambridge 2003), 203.

- 98 J. Lassus, *Inventaire archéologique de la région au nord-est de Hama* (Damascus 1935) I, 232–233 (list of tells); illustrations in volume II.
- 99 J. Cassana, 'The archaeological landscape of Late Roman Antioch', in I. Sandwell and J. Huskinson, eds., *Culture and Society in Later Roman Antioch* (Oxford 2004), 102–125; T.J. Wilkinson and J. Casana, 'The Amuq valley archaeological survey', in K.A. Yener, ed., *The Amuq Valley project (1955–2001)* (forthcoming).
- 100 Grainger 1990, op. cit. (n. 6), 27–28; Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, op. cit. (n. 97).
- 101 Grainger 1990, op. cit. (n. 6), 31–66.
- 102 Ibidem 42–45; Jones 1971, op. cit. (n. 6), 321; 244. The evidence is the survival to present day of the pre-Hellenic names.
- 103 Jones 1971, op. cit. (n. 6), 242–243.
- 104 Civic self-government see Jones 1971, op. cit. (n. 6), 245.
- 105 Jones 1971, op. cit. (n. 6), 36–37.
- 106 Grainger 1990, op. cit. (n. 6), 115–119.
- 107 Ibidem, 104–105.
- 108 Ibidem, 70–72.

third century. Diocletian's reorganisation of the defence structure of Northern Syria greatly accelerated it. Hellenisation expanded enormously under the Romans. Sedentary agriculture and arboriculture replaced the nomadic way of life over wide areas. By AD 550 Syria was more densely populated than ever before or since, or at least until today. At this point intensification came to an end, and abatement set in.

Nomads, Phylarchs and Settlement in Syria and Palestine*

Nomads and Sedentary Farmers

There has been much discussion of the relations between nomads and sedentary peasants. Some have emphasized that the relationship of the two ways of life, because of their competition for the same natural resources, is inevitably hostile.¹ Others have pointed out that peasants and nomads are mutually dependent, and that the survival of each depends on their reaching agreement for conditions of peaceful coexistence and cooperation.² More recently the proponents of a cooperative relationship have been in the majority. There has also been the important recognition of the point that the purely sedentary and the purely nomadic are extremes on a spectrum of different ways of combining agriculture with animal rearing. Even largely nomadic tribes are partly settled.³ Often only part of a nomadic group, sometimes a larger sometimes a smaller proportion of the whole, takes part in the annual migration, leaving the rest in their base area practising sedentary farming.⁴ Groups which are predominantly nomadic often have a permanent base in an agricultural environment to which they return for the driest season every year.⁵ They may have fixed

* This article was previously published in *Settlements and Demography in the Near East in Late Antiquity*, eds. A.S. Lewin & P. Pellegrina, Pisa / Rome, 2006, pp. 13–145.

- 1 S.T. Parker, *Peasants, Pastoralists and pax romana: A Different View*, BASOR 265, 1987, 35–51.
- 2 E.B. Banning, *Peasants, Pastoralists and the pax romana*, BASOR 261, 1986, 25–50; Id., *De bello paceque*, BASOR 265, 1987, 52–54; D.F. Graf, *Rome and the Saracens: Reassessing the Nomadic Menace*, in D.F. Graf (ed.), *Rome and the Arabian Frontier from the Nabataeans to the Saracens*, Aldershot 1997, no. IX. B. Shaw, *Fear and Loathing: The Nomad Menace and Roman Africa*, in D.F. Graf (ed.), *Rulers, Nomads and Christians in Roman North Africa*, Aldershot 1995, no. VII.
- 3 R. Cribb, *Nomads in Archaeology*, Cambridge 1991, 23–43 discusses the integration of pastoralism and agriculture. Th. Brüggemann, *Nundinae als Bindeglied zwischen römischer Administration und indigener Gesellschaft im antiken Nordafrika*, in B. Streck (hrsg.), *Segmentation und Komplementarität: organisatorische, ökonomische und kulturelle Aspekte der Interaktion von Nomaden und Sesshaften*, Halle 2004, 157–158.
- 4 B. Spooner, *The Status of Nomadism as a Cultural Phenomenon in the Middle East*, JAAS 7, 1972, 122–130.
- 5 M. Rowton, *Dimorphic Structure and Topology*, “Oriens Antiquus” 15, 1976, 17–31.

cemeteries. Nomads often exercise patronage and control over sedentary peasants and even towns.⁶ The facts that nomads usually had a permanent base area is of great importance when we try to understand the historical role of the nomads in Late Roman Syria: it made a great difference to their behaviour whether the base of a nomad group was on the Roman or the Persian edge of the desert.

The Role of the Army

Turning to relations of nomads and sedentary farmers in Roman Syria there is one phenomenon which immediately strikes the eye, the eastward advance of permanent settlements as far as the line beyond which there is not enough rainfall to allow agriculture unassisted by artificial irrigation, and in many places further than that. On average the advance must amount to something like hundred and fifty kilometres.⁷ This might suggest that as agriculture advanced nomadic groups were simply pushed into the desert. But this is not what happened. Nomads continued to be a significant part of the population. There is clear evidence for this in literary sources, particularly for the Negev but also for Palestine and Northern Syria. That nomads continued their traditional way of life within the frontiers of the Empire has also been shown by field surveys.⁸ The sources refer to them as Saracens.⁹ What seems to have happened is that nomads and peasants, as far as they were distinct groups, found arrangements that enabled farmers to cultivate their land and nomads to maintain their annual migrations side by side.¹⁰ It is also certain that a

6 P. Bienkowski – E. van der Steen, *Tribes, Trade and Towns, a New Framework for the Late Iron Age in Southern Jordan and the Negev*, BASOR 323, 2001, 21–47; G. Avni, *Nomads, Farmers and Town-dwellers: Pastoralist Sedentist Interaction in the Negev Highlands Sixth to Eighth Centuries CE*, Jerusalem 1996.

7 Most recently, G. Tate, *Le problème de la défense et du peuplement de la steppe et du désert dans le nord de la Syrie, entre la chute de Palmyra et le règne de Justinien*, “Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes” 42, 1996, 331–337; W. Liebeschuetz, *The Impact of the imposition of Roman rule on Northern Syria*, in L. De Blois – P. Erdkamp (eds.), *The Impact of the Roman Army (200 BC–AD 476)*, Leiden / Boston 2007, 421–438.

8 The controversy between Banning and Parker (see n. 12 below) is partly about the interpretation of field surveys.

9 On the original meaning of Saracen see D.F. Graf, *Defence of the Arabian Frontier*, in Id. (ed.), *Rome and the Arabian Frontier*, cit. n. 2, 1–26, relevant 14–15.

10 Nilus, *Narrationes*, PG LXXIX, 661 (c. 400 AD); breakdown of agreement between Pharan in Sinai with local nomads giving security from raids against payment of money.

considerable proportion of the 'new' farmers were nomads who had adopted a permanently settled life, so that the balance of agriculture and pasturage was an internal matter for the group. But how far the advance of agriculture was the result of population pressure, how far of the settlement of nomads is still quite uncertain.

Nevertheless the preservation of peaceful relations between nomads and sedentary farmers cannot have been easy. Quite apart from the fact that raiding is part of the nomad way of life,¹¹ and that the interrelation between different nomadic groups is highly competitive and often leads to conflict, the expansion of cultivated land must have considerably restricted the movements of roaming nomadic grazers. Peasants and nomads were in competition for the use of limited resources of land and water. Powerful conflicts of interest were bound to arise, so that there must always have been danger that one party or the other would resort to violence. Presumably this is where the Roman authorities came in.¹² The whole development took place under Roman rule, and Roman policing.

The function of the Roman army cannot however have been limited to enforcing peaceful relations within the frontier. The achievement of a peaceful equilibrium between the inhabitants of expanding agricultural settlements and nomads accustomed to move freely through the territory must have been difficult enough. Uncontrolled entry of new nomadic groups would have made it impossible. Raiding was then, and has been until very recent times,¹³ an accepted practice of nomad groups. That there was pressure on the *limes* from the desert side is shown not only by the recorded incidents of raids, but also by the repeated granting of permission for large immigrant groups of nomads to enter the Empire. It was evidently a function of the forts on the border to

11 L.E. Sweet, *Camel Raiding of the North Arabian Bedouin: a Mechanism of Ecological Adaptation*, "American Anthropologist" 67, 1965, 1132–1150; Id., *Peoples and Cultures in the Near East*, New York 1970.

12 This is basically the view argued by Parker, *Peasants, Pastoralists and the pax Romana*, cit. Banning, *Peasants, Pastoralists and the pax romana*, cit., shows that pastoralists and sedentaries can achieve a stable coexistence without external coercion, but he does not take into account the expansion of agriculture and the tension it must have created. P. Mayerson, *Saracens and Romans: Micro Macro Relationship*, BASOR 274, 1989, 71–78 arbitrates between Parker and Banning. At the same time he usefully cites much of the evidence for conflict.

13 Sweet, *Peoples and Cultures of the Near East*, cit., 265–289; ancient accounts of raiding across the frontier are not very abundant, but sufficiently so to show that it was a reality: P. Mayerson, *The Saracens on the Limes*, BASOR 262, 1986, 35–47. Whether we hear about them or not depends on whether we have sources of the kind that would mention them.

control and regulate the entry of new groups, and in this way to protect both nomads and sedentary peasants within the *limes*. It is not a coincidence that the expansion of settlement on the limestone massif, and in the steppe areas further east only took off on a large scale after the establishment of a continuous line of forts along the edge of the desert from Palmyra to the Euphrates by Diocletian and successors, at the beginning of the fourth century.¹⁴

Immigrants Across a Permeable Border

The establishment of a line of military posts along the frontier was surely a necessary precondition for the astonishing agricultural developments of the subsequent two hundred and fifty years. But this does not mean that the fortified border served as a wall to block entry and exit into the Empire completely. The contrary was true.¹⁵ It is certain that there continued to be a great deal of traffic in both directions across the *limes*, and that the nomads, who had previously roamed freely across the road from Palmyra to Sura on the Euphrates, continued to cross and re-cross the frontier, as they had always done, though now under control.¹⁶ This certainly seems to be what happened in North Africa, where the migrating nomads were charged customs duty.¹⁷ The role of the phylarchs, which will be discussed later in this paper¹⁸ shows that the

14 Recent archaeological work: M. Konrad, *Frühkaiserliche Befestigungen an der Strata Diocletiana, neue Kleinfunde des 1. Jahrhunderts aus Nordsyrien*, "Damaszner Mitteilungen" 9, 1996, 163 ff.; also Ead., *Resafa v: Der spätrömische Limes in Syrien, archäologische Untersuchungen an den Grenzkastellen von Sura, Tetrapyrgium, Cholle und in Resafa*, Mainz 2001, 96–116, esp., 114–115.

15 M. Sartre, *Transhumance, économie et société de montagne en Syrie du sud*, "Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes" 41, 1997, 75–86; B. Isaac, *The Limits of Empire, the Roman Army in the East*, Oxford 1990, 249: "the futility of any effort to draw a political or military boundary line for the Empire in this period".

16 In 528, Arethas, the Kindite, left Palestine with many of his followers, so as to enter into a relationship with the Persians, as it would seem. But they were destroyed by the Lakhmids, the existing nomadic allies of the Persians, Malalas 434–435; Theophanes 179, cf. Sartre, *Transhumance, économie et société*, cit., 166–168.

17 See the Zarai tariff of customs charged on a route still used to day by Nomads crossing the Sahara, *CIL* VIII 4508, and on it E. Fentress, *Numidia and the Roman Army*, (BAR 15, 53), Oxford 1979, 183–184; B.D. Shaw, *Fear and Loathing: the Nomad Menace in Roman North Africa*, in Graf (ed.), *Rulers, Nomads and Christians in Roman North Africa*, cit., 42–43; Shaw, *Rural Markets in North Africa*, *ibid.*, no. 1, 60 also Brüggemann, *Nundinae als Bindeglied*, cit., 157–158.

18 See below.

Syrian nomads inside the empire continued to enjoy close relations with nomad groups in the Arabian desert, friendly with some, hostile with others.

It clear that new groups of nomads still entered the empire,¹⁹ and probably considerably more frequently than our sources let us know. It seems that late in the fourth century the tribe of the Salih, or at least part of it, entered the empire and settled in various places along the edge of the Syro-Mesopotamian desert, with its leader being granted the title of phylarch.²⁰ Next, around 420 Aspebetos²¹ and a large number of followers, men, women and children, fled from an area controlled by the Persians. They were admitted into the empire, and given a treaty. Aspebetos was appointed phylarch of the Saracens under treaty in Arabia, that is the Roman province of Arabia.²² We are told that they encamped in Arabia, though many of them later set up camps in Palestine.²³ His grandson and great grandson Terebon 1 and 2 were also given the title of phylarchs of the Saracens,²⁴ but perhaps of the Saracens in Palestine, rather than Arabia. Next we hear that in 473 Amorcesus (Imru'al-Qays),²⁵ coming from the Persian sphere of influence, launched a series of raids on both Arabs and Romans, and built up a considerable following among the desert Saracens. After he had seized the island of Iotabe on the mouth of the gulf of Aqaba, he asked the emperor Leo to appoint him phylarch of the Saracens under Roman rule living around Petra. Leo granted him the appointment. Now Amorcesus seems to have held the Roman post at the same time as a chieftainship outside the empire. His strategy of putting the Empire under pressure, while at the same time asking for a Roman command resembles the behaviour of Alaric and other Germanic leaders in the West.

19 For the following see M. Sartre, *Les nomads et l'empire en Arabie*, in Id., *Trois études sur l'Arabie romaine et Byzantine*, (Collection Latomus, 178), Bruxelles 1982, 121–203, esp. 144–188.

20 *Inter alia*: I. Kavar, *The Last Days of the Salih*, *Arabica* 5, 1958, 145–158. The immigration and phylarchate of the Salih is not mentioned in Roman sources, but recorded only in Late Arabic texts, especially Ya'qubi (9th/10th cent.), ed. M.Th. Houtsma, Leiden 1883, p. 235, but it has been generally accepted, see Sartre, *Les nomads et l'empire en Arabie*, cit. n.19 above, 146–148; C.E. Bosworth – E. van Ponzel – W.P. Heinrichs – G. Lecomte (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. VIII, Leiden 1995, 981–982, s.v. Salih. I wonder whether the bulk of the tribe stayed outside the Empire. Baladhuri 145 on Salih settled near Chalcis.

21 *PLRE* II 169–170, s.v. Aspebetus *qui et Petrus*.

22 It is generally assumed that 'Arabia' here means the province of Arabia.

23 Cyril of Scythopolis, *V. Euth.* 67, 20; 68, 1 (Schwartz). Cf. Sartre, *Les nomads et l'empire en Arabie*, cit. n. 19 above, 151–152 and 123–124, but is Malka in Palestine or Arabia?

24 *V. Euth.* 35.

25 *PLRE* II 73, s.v. Amorcessus.

In the 490s the eastern provinces were under heavy pressure from raiding tribesmen. In Mesopotamia Lakhmid tribesmen invaded the province of Euphratensis, while further south Arab raiders penetrated far into Syria and sacked Emesa. In Palestine, in 498, the *dux* Romanus²⁶ engaged and defeated a raiding force led by Ogarus, son of the Kinda chief Arethas. Around the same time Romanus also had to confront a band led by Gabala, of the Ghassanid tribe, which had overrun Palestine.²⁷ Four years later Badicharimus, brother of Ogarus launched a series of wide-ranging raids into Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine.²⁸

The response of the Empire to this crisis was to enter into treaty arrangements with the two principal raiding tribes, the Kinda and the Ghassanids.²⁹ Some time later, we do not know precisely when, Arethas, who was the father of Ogarus and Badicharimus, and the chief of the Kinda still outside the Empire, was given the office of phylarch of the Saracens,³⁰ probably of the Saracens in Palestine, though that is not stated, and another Arethas, a Ghassanid became phylarch among the Arabians.³¹ It is significant that both these phylarchs, like Amorcessus earlier, received a Roman command, while retaining a tribal leadership outside the Empire. Once more we are reminded of comparable situations in the West.

It was probably not much later, probably still in the reign of Anastasius (491–518), that the Ghassanids were given permission to install themselves inside the borders of the Empire in the area between Bostra and Damascus, which is where they are subsequently found. Roman sources have no information about this treaty, but according to Arab sources the entry into the Empire of the Ghassanids was negotiated, not directly with the emperor or one of his officials, but by mediation of the Salih,³² who, as we have seen, had become

26 *PLRE* II 548, s.v. Romanus 5.

27 Theophanes *AM* 5990.

28 Theophanes *AM* 5994.

29 Evagrius, *HE* III 36. That Kinda and Ghassanids were involved is not stated by Evagrius, but argued by Sartre, *Les nomads et l'empire en Arabie*, cit. n. 19, 160.

30 On Arethas (al-Harith), son of Amr see *PLRE* II 139–140, on Theophanes *AM* 5990 (AD 498), 5995 (AD 502), 6021 (AD 528). The imperial phylarchate is only mentioned in Malalas 434–435 (AD 528) on the occasion of his quarrel with the *dux* of Palestine, his flight into the Persian sphere and subsequent death.

31 Procopius I 17, 47 (around AD 530): “Arethas the son of Gabalas who ruled over the Saracens among the Arabians”. On him see *PLRE* III 111–113, s.v. Arethas (al-Harith ibn Jabalah).

32 Sartre, *Les nomads et l'empire en Arabie*, cit. n. 19, 157, citing Ya'qubi, *Histoires*, ed. Houtsma, Leyden 1883, vol. I, p. 235.

an important Arab ally of the Empire about a hundred years earlier. The Ghassanids were established in the Batanea, between Bostra and Damascus, where numerous places, and some monastic foundations are associated with the Ghassanids in mainly Arabic sources.³³

In 528, when the Kindite Arethas was killed, one Abocharabus (Abu Karib), a Ghassanid, who was leader of Saracens in the region known as the Palm-trees just beyond the border of the province of Palestina Tertia, ceded the Palm-trees to Justinian, and was appointed phylarch of the Saracens in Palestine. Henceforth he guarded that province from raiders coming out of the desert.³⁴

The question arises what is meant when we talk of the establishment of the Ghassanids, and other tribal groups within the Empire. It is unlikely that all these people who had previously been nomadic grazers, suddenly turned into arable farmers. As far as I know there is no evidence pointing to systematically organized mass-settlement. It is more likely that establishment of a nomadic group meant that it was allowed to establish a base area on the edge of the arable zone, where the migrants would return for the driest part of summer at the end of their annual migration. For example, when some followers of Aspebetus wanted to settle near the monastery of Euthymius, in southern Palestine, the abbot showed them where to build a church and where to place tents. After this several more camps were set up.³⁵ Eventually Aspebetus himself was consecrated with the title bishop of the camps.³⁶ It is perhaps likely that in time an increasing proportion of the group adopted a predominantly sedentary life.³⁷ That they nevertheless maintained a high degree of mobility is shown by the fact that imperial government employed members of these nomad groups to police the desert.³⁸ Moreover the Saracens continued to live in tents. For when the camp established near the monastery of Euthymius was destroyed by barbarian raiders, the leaders of the group again set up a tented camp, but this time near the monastery of Martyrius.³⁹ When the Muslims came to Syria camps of Roman Arabs are said to have existed at Emesa and elsewhere in northern Syria.⁴⁰ When the Muslims had conquered Palestine

33 Sartre, *Les nomads et l'empire en Arabie*, cit., 177–188 and map 5.

34 Procopius I 19, 8–13, cf. *PLRE* III 3, s.v. Abocharabus.

35 *V. Euth.* 25, 5.

36 *Ibid.*, 25, 9.

37 *Ibid.*, 75–76: two Saracens who lived in Lazarion, which is described as an estate (κτῆμα).

38 *V. Joh. Hes.* 211, 20: φυλάττειν τὴν ἔρημην.

39 *V. Euth.* 67.

40 Baladhuri, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, tr. P.K. Hitti, New York 1916, 144; I. Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century*, Washington 1984, 401–404.

and Syria, the Ghassanids were still sufficiently mobile for Gabalas their king to be able to migrate with thirty thousand of his followers, and to resettle them near Melitene.⁴¹

The Office of Phylarch

The first point to note is that these functionaries were not native tribal leaders, but officers appointed by the Roman government. They were not appointed to a particular tribe, but to 'Saracens' in general, and moreover to leadership of the Saracens in a particular area.⁴² Even when an individual had immigrated into the Empire with a considerable personal following, the Roman rank of phylarch not only confirmed his authority over his own followers, but also gave him the leadership over all the 'Saracens' in a specified region. One can see the reasons for these appointments. Because of their annual migrations nomadic groups did not fit easily into the regular provincial administration. It would seem that they did not have the status of full citizens of the Empire, but rather that of allies,⁴³ based on a treaty.⁴⁴ That might be why they were not made subject to the ordinary provincial administration, but were given officers of their own. Presumably the phylarch would command the scattered camps and settlements of the nomads in his territory, much like the *dux* commanded the encampments of soldiers. A system of this kind had already existed in the Hauran in the second and third centuries,⁴⁵ but then we have no information about phylarchs until the later fourth century. One may ask why there is no evidence from the intervening years.⁴⁶ It may be that the Roman imperial gov-

41 *PLRE* IIIB, 497 s.v. Gabalas (Jabalah ibn al-Ayham) on Baladhuri p. 13 (= Hitti 208–210).

42 I don't agree with R. Paret, *Notes sur un passage de Malalas concernant les phylarques Arabes*, "Arabica" 5, 1958, 251–262, citation on p. 253: "Le phylarch n'est donc que la chefferie traditionnelle".

43 According to Theophylact Simocatta III 17, 7 the Ghassanid Alamandarus was a 'nomadic barbarian'.

44 Procopius I 17, 46 defines a phylarch as *Ζαρακηνῶν τῶν Ῥωμαίοις ἐνσπόνδων ἡγούμενος*. See also *V. Euth.* 19, 7–8.

45 Sartre, *Les nomads et l'empire en Arabie*, cit. n. 19, 122–126. It is not clear whether these early generals and ethnarchs of the nomads were appointed by the imperial government.

46 Our evidence continues to be patchy. Could the emergence of more powerful federations in the Arab world, signalled by the successful campaigns of queen Mavia in Palestine and Phoenicia, c. AD 373–378, (*PLRE* I 369), have led to the adoption of new policies by the Roman government? On the episode see A. Lewin, *Amr ibn Adi, Mavia, the Phylarchs and the Late Roman Army. Peace and War in the Near East, Liber Annuus* 51 (2001), 293–314.

ernment's policy of employing nomad allies to patrol the desert, and to fight nomads who were the clients of the Persians, was only adopted in the later part of the fourth century.⁴⁷ One might suggest that it was a response to a consolidation of tribes in the Arabian desert, resulting in increased pressure on the frontier area, most strikingly the activities of queen Mavia.

No law outlining the duties of a phylarch has survived. There are two laws which include phylarchs, together with dukes and officials of some other imperial departments, as well as powerful private persons, in a list of individuals who are forbidden take part in the exaction of taxes, something they were evidently eager to do, for their own profit and at the expense the tax payers.⁴⁸ In these laws the office of phylarch is treated as parallel to that of dux, in that the phylarch commands the Saracens in a province, as the *dux* is commander of the Roman *limitanei*. The provinces concerned are Palaestina Prima and Arabia. In 528 Justinian ordered the dukes of Phoenicia, Arabia and Mesopotamia together with "the phylarchs of the provinces" to attack Alamundarus, the phylarch allied to the Persians.⁴⁹ When Theodoras,⁵⁰ *dux* of Palestine, marched to suppress a revolt of the Samaritans he took with him the phylarch of Palestine. We are told that the phylarch took 20,000 prisoners and sold them in Persian and Indian territory.⁵¹ When the sources mention phylarchs they generally do so in a military context. The regular duty of their men, the Saracens, was to guard the approaches to the desert.⁵² Above all they served to defend the Roman frontier provinces from the raids of Saracens allied to the Persians, not always successfully.⁵³ Phylarchs might have to warn the monks in the Palestinian desert of an incursion which they had not been

47 It is not clear how far this strategy involved withdrawal of the regular army. B. Isaac, *The Army in the Late Roman East, the Persian Wars and the Byzantine Provinces*, in Averil Cameron (ed.), *The Byzantine and Islamic Near East 3: States, Resources, Armies*, Princeton 1989, 125–155 shows that many Negev settlements were still (or again) garrisoned in the sixth century. Konrad, *Frühkaiserliche Befestigungen an der Strata Diocletiana*, cit. n. 19, shows that the fort Qseir, south of Resafa, was only evacuated in 580s. See also S.T. Parker, *The Roman Frontier in Central Jordan*, (BAR 15, 340), Oxford 1987, and Id., *Romans and Saracens: A History of the Arabian Frontier*, Winona Lake, IN, 1986.

48 Nov. CII 1 (AD 536); *Edict* IV 2.

49 Malalas 435.

50 See *PLRE* IIIA, 1245–1246, s.v. Theodorus 5.

51 Malalas 446–447.

52 Theophanes AM 6123 (AD 630/631). Saracens on the Persian side had the same duty: *V. Euth.* 10, 25.

53 Procopius I 17, 46.

able to prevent.⁵⁴ However Phylarchs might also go on the offensive against the same Persian Saracens. In addition Phylarchs were required to provide contingents of Saracens under their own leadership to be part of Roman expeditionary forces.⁵⁵

Apart from their military roles, phylarchs had the important diplomatic function of helping to maintain good relations between the Empire and the free tribes of Arabia. We have seen that it was not an imperial official, but the Salih, that allowed the Ghassanids to enter the Empire. We happen to be informed that sometime between 540 and 544 King Abraha of the Himyarites received one embassy from Abukarib (Abocharabus), the Ghassanite phylarch of Palestine, and another from Arethas (Harith) the Ghassanite phylarch of Arabia. No doubt it is because of the importance of good relations between the Empire and the free Arabs that the imperial authorities often appointed as phylarchs men who either still were, or at least had been, leaders of groups in the Arabian desert. A notable case is that of the Kindite Caisus (*PLRE* III s.v. Qaysus, 259) who was chieftain of the Arab tribes of Kind (Kindites) and Ma'add (Maddeni) from 528–531. When he was driven from his tribal position the Romans restored him, hoping that he would lead tribal auxiliaries to assist the Romans against the Persians. Shortly after they persuaded Caisus to resign his chieftainship in favour of his two brothers, and to become phylarch in Palestine, perhaps in *Palestina Prima and Secunda*.

Their diplomatic role therefore explains why recent immigrants, or even chieftains of groups outside the Empire, were often appointed to this imperial post: these men retained allies and influence beyond the frontier. It had always been Roman policy to protect the frontiers not only by fortifications but also by maintaining a system of treaties with tribes over the border. It is likely that most of the immigrant phylarchs had been allies of the Romans before they entered the Empire. By receiving them into the Empire the Romans bound their allies more closely into the system. The arrangement gave the allied nomads a secure base, and the Empire greater influence over the phylarch's allies beyond the frontier.

Early in his reign Justinian found that the various phylarchs operating in isolation were no match for Alamundarus, the Lakhmid ally of the Persians, and

54 *V. Joh. Hes.* 211, 20.

55 Theophanes *AM* 5997, Asouades (AD 503) against Persians; Arethas, the Ghassanid, was in the force sent against Alamandurus, the Lakhmid, together with the phylarchs Gnouphas (*PLRE* III 538) and Naaman I (*PLRE* III 907) in AD 528: Malalas 435, Theophanes *AM* 6021. He also took part in the Persian campaign of AD 531: Malalas 461 ff., Procopius I 18, 7 ff.; and again in AD 541: Procopius II 16, 5.

appointed Arethas the Ghassanite phylarch of Arabia, "leader of as many tribes as possible", with the Roman title of patrician, and the rank of *gloriosus*, and further allowed him to call himself king.⁵⁶ Henceforth he was far more powerful than any duke. In fact his position resembled that of the two Theoderics, rulers of groups of Goths settled in Thrace in the previous century, with their combination of tribal leadership and imperial commands. Now his actions might draw the Empire into war, rather than the other way round. It was a dispute between Arethas and Alamundarus of the Persians over the ownership of some land around the *strata Diocletiana*, the desert road from Damascus to the Euphrates, which caused a war between the two empires in 537/538.⁵⁷ In 540, when he was part of a Roman expeditionary force, Arethas blatantly disobeyed orders so as to be able to keep his plunder, and he got away with it.⁵⁸ In 546–547 Arethas and Alamundarus fought a war without the participation of the two empires.⁵⁹ In 550 the king of Persia accused Arethas of making war on Alamundarus in time of peace.⁶⁰ In 554 Arethas defeated and killed his Lakhmid rival.⁶¹

When Arethas died in 570 his son Alamundarus inherited the general phylarchate.⁶² But eventually the power exercised by the king of the Saracens was too much for the emperor Maurice, and in 580 the Ghassanid Alamundarus was treacherously arrested, and exiled to Sicily. This action resulted in war between the Roman government and its Arab allies which lasted several years.⁶³ Peace was eventually restored, but the unified command of all the Arabs allied to the Empire was not. A Syriac author tells us that the Ghassanid kingdom now broke up into fifteen chieftainships, most of whom joined the Persians. Others laid down their arms and settled down in towns and villages. The passage is rather obscure. We would like to know more about the circumstance in which some Saracen chiefs "joined the Persians" and others "laid down their arms and settled". Does the latter phrase mean that these Saracens gave up their nomadic life, and as a result became incapable of patrolling the desert?

56 Procopius I 17, 47; *PLRE* IIIA, III.

57 Procopius II 1–11. It seems to follow from Procopius' account that the forts along at least a stretch of this line were no longer occupied.

58 Procopius II 19, II, 15–18; II 26, 9.

59 Procopius II 28, 12–14.

60 Procopius IV II, 10.

61 *V. Sym. Iun.* 187; Mich. Syr., *Chron.* 724, tr. J.B. Chabot, *CSCO* (Scr. Syr.) III 4 (1903), sa 865.

62 *PLRE* IIIA 34–37 s.v. Alamundarus (al-Mundhir ibn al-Harith).

63 On the end of the general phylarchate see Sartre, *Les nomads et l'empire en Arabie*, cit. n. 19, 189–194; *PLRE* III 908 s.v. Naamanes 3.

There can be no doubt that the abolition of the overall command over all the nomads greatly weakened the defences of the Roman East, though it did not put an end to all cooperation between Romans and Saracen allies. It is certain that at the time of the Muslim invasion some groups of Saracen allies, including the Ghassanids, were still, or again, fighting on the Roman side.⁶⁴ On the other hand it is clear that the overall organisation of Justinian was not restored. Arab tribal groups seem to have decided on their own whether to resist the invaders from the desert or to come to terms with them.⁶⁵

Saracens and the Expansion of Settled Farming

Is there a connection between the Roman government's reliance on nomad federates for guarding the desert fringe and the great expansion of sedentary agriculture in the same area? There is no direct evidence. The Saracens have left no contemporary writings, and like all nomads they are difficult to trace archaeologically. In any case there has been no archaeological examination of their base areas. Apart from the Hauran we do not even know where they were. It is also clear that the nomad federates were not the only cause of the expansion. The 'colonisation' of the limestone massif certainly began long before the age of the imperial phylarchs in the north of Syria. But the Roman reliance on federates does coincided with last phase of intense settlement in the late fifth and early sixth century, and its latest flowering, restricted to only some areas, in the second half of the sixth century.

It is possible to devise a model of expansion in which the Arab federates have a role. It can be taken for certain that the federates received subsidies in money or in kind, even though paradoxically we hear about it only when the Roman authority withheld financial support, and this led to conflict, as when after a victory in 570 Alamundarus the Ghassanid demanded and was refused gold to pay his troops.⁶⁶ We also learn that the end of the general phylarchate resulted in the end of the payment of *annona* to the Ghassanids.⁶⁷ In 630 an Arab group was refused their wages and promptly joined the Muslims.⁶⁸ In addition to the subsidies they received from the Roman government, the

64 W.E. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, Cambridge 1992, 51–57.

65 Baladhuri, III–III2, 144–146.

66 John of Ephesus *HE* III 6.3.

67 John of Ephesus *HE* III 41–2.

68 Theophanes *AM* 6123 (336), a different version involving Sergius and 30 lbs. of gold: Nikephorus, *Chron.* 20.

expeditions led by Arethas and his sons sometimes won a great deal of plunder, which they no doubt spent in their area of settlement. So the arrangements between the Roman government and the nomads brought wealth into the frontier zone. This in its turn must have attracted not only traders from the west to trade with the nomadic encampments, but also more immigrants from the eastern desert.

Among places associated with Saracen settlements in Syria are Qaryatayn between Emesa and Palmyra and Nabk north of Damascus. There were Arab settlements in the neighbourhood of Chalcis and Aleppo.⁶⁹ There seem to have been Saracen troops and a Saracen phylarch at Resapha,⁷⁰ where there was also what seems to have been a Ghassanid residence.⁷¹ There is some, but not in fact very much, explicit evidence that the Ghassanid phylarchs took an active interest in the development of northern Syria elsewhere than at Resapha.⁷² Arethas founded a monastery at Qasr el-Heyr, between Palmyra and Damascus,⁷³ and his son, the *paneuphemus patricius* Alamundarus, a fort at el-Burdj near Dumeir.⁷⁴ Their presence and authority in the north is however also witnessed by an inscription recording an acclamations of the patrician Arethas, and another dating building by "the phylarchate of the *endoxotatos* Arethas", at Seleucia.⁷⁵ Building activity by phylarchs other than the Ghassanids is witnessed at Anasartha, a fort that was given city status by Justinian,⁷⁶ and seems to have flourished exceedingly in the 6th century. Here in 425/426 a Saracen princess Mavia, probably a granddaughter of the famous Saracen queen of the same name, built a shrine of St Thomas.⁷⁷ At the same time the *clarissimus* Silvanus, κρατέων ἐν ἐρεμβοῖς, married a wife described as daughter of the kings of the phylarchs, and when his own daughter died

69 The Chronography of Bar Hebraeus, tr. E.A. Wallis Budge, 2 vols. Oxford 1932, repr. Amsterdam 1976, 89. For settlements in the neighbourhood of Chalcis and Aleppo see Baladhuri, tr. Hitti 144–146; I. Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century*, Washington 1984, 223–226.

70 A. Palmer, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, Liverpool 1993, 115 (Dionysius reconstituted 6). *PLRE* III 908 s.v. Naamanes 3.

71 J. Sauvaget, *Les Ghassanides et Sergiopolis*, "Byzantion" 14, 1939, 115–130.

72 Sauvaget, *Les Ghassanides et Sergiopolis*, cit., n. 66 above: an acclamation of Alamundarus the Ghassanid inscribed in apse of 'audience hall' (*SEG* VII 188).

73 "Syria" 20, 1939, 362–371 of 559 AD.

74 *CIG* 4517= Waddington III 2562c.

75 *IGLS* V 2553B, 2553D.

76 Malalas 414.

77 *AE* 1947, 193; *PLRE* II 736. D. Feissel, *Les martyria d'Anasartha*, in *Mélanges G. Dagron*, T&M 14, 2002, 205–209.

he constructed a martyrs' shrine in her memory.⁷⁸ Finally in 594 and 609 one Abimeneus Gregorius,⁷⁹ with rank of *gloriosus* (ὁ πανεύφημος) paid for fortification of the city.

We know that the Ghassanids founded monasteries in Batanea and around Bostra.⁸⁰ It is likely enough that they also invested in water supply and irrigation schemes. There are very many irrigation schemes of late fifth or sixth century date in Northern Syria. The names of the men responsible are rarely commemorated on inscriptions, of which these works have produced very few.⁸¹ But it is likely enough that many of them were paid for by phylarchs and other leaders of the nomadic groups. The availability of water would make agriculture possible, and it is a reasonable assumption that nomads would increasingly find the life of settled farmers more attractive than that of annual migrations. It follows that there will have been a steady tendency for nomads based within the Empire to settle as farmers, and for nomads from the desert to be drawn into the border lands of the Empire in order to gain the advantages of imperial pay. Gaube has noted that the abundant 6th century, and especially of later 6th century, settlements in the steppe region north east of Hama developed a style of non-figurative ornament which is quite distinct from the ornament employed in the older settlements of northern Syria. He would like to explain the distinct style as the work of work of Arab settlement made possible by Ghassanid hegemony over this region.⁸²

On the other hand it is clear that the development of the steppe region was not only due to federate nomads and immigrants from the desert. Powerful subjects of the Empire were involved too. If Anasarthas was a centre of phylarch activity, Androna, which developed from a road station in the third century to

78 IGLS 297; PLRE II 1012 s.v. Silvanus 8. See Feissel, *Les martyria d'Anasarthas*, cit., 210–220.

79 See PLRE III 552–553. Abimeneus Gregorius 13. Abimeneus seems to be an Arab name, perhaps Abi- Ma'n. The rank of πανεύφημος (which was held by some Ghassanid general phylarchs) suggest that he was a phylarch, although he is not described as such.

80 Sartre, *Les nomades et l'empire en Arabie*, cit., 182–187, with reference to R. Dussaud, *Topographie historique de la Syrie antique et Médiévale*, Paris 1927. The ultimate sources are Hamza al-Isfahani (died AD 967) ed. Gottwald, 116–121, and the signatures of letter of the Monophysite abbots, *Lettre des archmandrites d'Arabie*, ed. and tr. Th.J. Lamy, Actes du XI^e Congrès des Orientalistes, Paris 1898, 117–137.

81 B. Geyer, *Des fermes Byzantines aux palais omayyades, on l'ingénieuse mise en valeur des plaines steppiques de Chalcidique*, in J. Nordiguan – J.-F. Salles (édd.), *Aux origines de l'archéologie aérienne, Mélanges Poidebard*, Beirut 2000, 109–22; Y. Calvet – B. Geyer, *Barrages antiques de Syrie*, Lyon 1992.

82 H. Gaube, *Arabs in Sixth Century Syria*, "British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin" 1981, 93–98.

a town like settlement with no less than nine churches in the sixth, owed its development to⁸³ one Theodorus, who built the *Kastron* in the second half of the 6th century,⁸⁴ a large,⁸⁵ and remarkably elaborate structure, as well as a bath building.⁸⁶ Theodorus was evidently a very wealthy man, but we know nothing about him. One might have expected a structure of this kind to have been built on behalf of the imperial government by a general. But it is a fact that very few of these late building inscriptions in this area are in any way imperial.⁸⁷ It is almost a rule that military structures, forts, and above all towers for protection of the local population,⁸⁸ are built by private individuals or clerics.⁸⁹

In the course of my paper I have been looking for an explanation of the astonishing expansion of permanent settlement in North Eastern Syria in the fifth and sixth centuries. I have suggested that the imperial government's reliance and subsidy of federate nomads might have been a factor in this development. I hope that what I have said about nomads and phylarchs has been of some interest, but I have obviously not solved my main problem. The question remains open.

83 C. 6 hectares.

84 *IGLS* 1682 (AD 558–559), 1678 (AD 583–584) Ch. Strube, *Vorbericht über die Grabungskampagnen in den Jahren 1997–2001*, *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 1, 2003, 25–115.

85 C. 75 m².

86 *IGLS* 1685; M. Mango, *Excavation and Survey at Andarin/Androna, the Oxford Team 1999*, *DOP* 56, 2002, 303 ff.

87 *IGLS* 1809, at Ma'an (east of Apamea) a fortress paid for by Justinian, an acclamation of the count John and the *a secretis* Theodore.

88 *IGLS* 1630–1631, John administrator of imperial estates at Taroutia; 1726: at Tell Haznè, a *periodeutēs*; 315: at Rasm el Hayed, by a *tracteutēs*; 1725: at Oumm el-Tin by *megaloprestatos* count Antoniochenos; 1789 at Roueyda by Thomas the deacon.

89 *IGLS* 270: Rasm el Boûz (by bishop and priests); 2517: Salaman by *periodeutes*.

Late Late Antiquity (6th and 7th Centuries) in the Cities of the Roman Near East*

In northern Syria, along the desert fringe, villages have produced a very large number of late inscriptions.¹ Much less is known about the major cities. Epiphania (Hama)² and Emesa (Homs) have left few archaeological or epigraphic remains, principally because their sites are still densely built up. Late Roman Antioch is deeply buried.³ Apamea is the exception. The city was abandoned in the Middle Ages. This has given the Baltys the opportunity to excavate the city, which achieved the status of provincial capital around 415, and for some time flourished exceedingly. After earthquakes in 526 and 528 had destroyed much of Apamea, monumental colonnades, mansions and churches were rebuilt, even though the agora was progressively abandoned. In 573 the city was burnt by the Persians, and a large part of its population deported. From this date there is evidence of decline and impoverishment, though the destroyed monuments were rebuilt once more. It was only in the second quarter of the 7th century that the character of the city began to change radically, great mansions being clumsily remodelled into working farms.⁴ There is evidence that the cities of northern Syria were already weakened before the last and most destructive Persian war (602–629). The coastal cities did not really recover before the coming of the Egyptian Fatimid dynasty in 969.⁵

Pentz has suggested that economic regression in northern Syria had a serious effect on the livelihood of the caravan trading tribes of Arabia in the late

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1 Published in the series *IGLS*.

2 But see now: P. Pentz, *Hama, fouilles et recherches 1931–38*, IV, 1, *The Medieval Citadel and its Architecture*, Copenhagen 1997.

3 G. Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria*, Princeton 1961.

4 C. Balty, *Apamée au VI^e siècle*, in C. Morrisson & J. Lefort (eds.), *Hommes et richesses dans l'empire byzantin* I, Brussels 1989, 79–96.

5 H. Kennedy, *The last century of Byzantine Syria*, *ByzF* 10, 1985, 141–183; also *Antioch from Byzantium to Islam*, in J. Rich (ed.), *The City in Later Antiquity*, London 1992, 181–198; L. Conrad, *The plague in Bilad al-Sham in pre-Islamic times*, in M.A. Bakhit and M. Asfour (eds.), *Proceedings of the Symposium on Bilad al-Sham* II, Amman 1986, 143–163; Id., *Epidemic disease in central Syria in the late sixth century: Some new insights from the verse of Hanân ibn Thâbit*, *BMGS* 18, 1994, 12–58.

6th and early 7th centuries, and that the resulting hardship was a principal motive for their invasion of the settled lands of Syria and Palestine under Islam.⁶ This is an interesting hypothesis, but to date nothing more. What is clear is that the 7th century did not bring about a collapse of urbanism in Syria comparable to that which happened at that time in Asia Minor.

In Palestine a number of the cities evidently increased their populations in later Late Antiquity. The walled area of Caesarea was extended in the fifth century to enclose about 95 ha, that of Tiberias in the sixth to enclose around 75 ha.⁷ Twenty two towns of Byzantine Palestine and Arabia measured over 30 ha, of which six ranged between 80 and 100 ha, and three were larger than 100 ha. Jerusalem, the largest city covered 120 ha.⁸ The archaeological evidence for flourishing urban life is paralleled by the findings of area surveys of rural districts: there too the late Late Roman period appears to have been a time of peak activity.⁹

Cities were of course changing. Churches rather than temples came to dominate the townscape.¹⁰ Some temples were destroyed. We know most about a wave of destruction of temples in Syria around 390. This was instigated by the monks in the countryside, cooperating with bishops in the cities, among whom Marcellus of Apamea was the most active and fanatical.¹¹ Yet more often temples were simply allowed to decay, and their ruins, like those of the precinct of Artemis at Gerasa, and those of a second century temple in the very centre of Scythopolis, must have long continued to tower impressively over what were

6 P. Pentz, *The invisible conquest, the ontogenesis of sixth and seventh century Syria*, Copenhagen 1992, 68–71.

7 A. Walmsley, *Byzantine Palestine and Arabia*, in N. Christie & S.T. Loseby, *Towns in Transition: Urban Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, Aldershot and Brookfield 1996, 126–158, esp. 147–150.

8 M. Broshi, *The population of Western Palestine in the Roman-Byzantine period*, BASOR 236, (1980), 1–10.

9 Christie, Loseby, *Towns in Transition*, cit. (n. 7), 152, fig. 6, 8 (Hesban, Ghor & Araba, Yabis). Helen G. Saradi, *The Byzantine City in the Sixth Century, Literary Images and Historical Reality*, Athens 2006, 31–37, a very interesting and informative study. Building regulations: Catherine Saliou, *Le Traité d'urbanisme de Julien d'Ascalon (VI siècle)*, Travaux et Mémoires, Collège de France, Monographies 8, Paris 1996.

10 A special case: B. Brenk, *Die Christianisierung des jüdischen Stadtzentrums von Kapernaum*, in C. Moss and K. Kiefer (eds.), *Byzantine East, Latin West: Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann*, Princeton 1995, 15–26, on Christianisation of Jewish city centre.

11 Lib. Or. xxx, *Pro templis*, text and English tr. by F. Norman, *Libanius: Selected Works*, II, 92–151; Soz., HE VII 15; cf. F.R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization* II, Leiden 1994, 283–289.

now Christian cities. Over the years an enormous number of churches were built in cities, towns and villages.¹² But church-building started quite slowly. Comparatively few churches were built in the fourth century. Construction gathered pace in the early fifth and reached a peak in the late fifth and early sixth centuries.¹³ Eventually churches were extremely numerous. Fifteen have been identified at Gerasa, ten at Caesarea, five at Bostra, and no less than fifteen at Umm al-Jimal, which was in law only a village.¹⁴

In the course of our period, and well before there was a real threat of invasion, most cities had been given a circuit of walls.¹⁵ Caesarea, Scythopolis and Jerusalem received new colonnaded streets.¹⁶ Walls, colonnaded streets and churches were now the defining features of urban civilisation. Floors with mosaic representations of local cities became popular in Syria and Arabia at this time, and their simplified and schematic design emphasises above all walls, gates, colonnaded streets and churches.¹⁷ Theatres and amphitheatres and agoras on the other hand were often abandoned. Infilling of public spaces, and the building of more or less permanent commercial structures between the columns of monumental colonnades, occurred here, as it did in Asia Minor. It is not necessarily evidence of the loss of control by the civic authorities. The installing of permanent shops in the colonnade of a principal street is particularly well evidenced in the so called Byzantine commercial street at

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- 12 A. Ovadiah, *Corpus of Byzantine Churches in the Holy Land*, Bonn 1970; A. Ovadiah & C. Gomez de Silva, *Supplément*, 13, 1981; 14, 1982, 122–70; 16, 1983, 129–165. P. Donceel-Voûte, *Les pavements des églises byzantines de Syrie et du Liban*, Louvain 1988. T. Ulbert, *Bischof und Kathedrale: 4.–7. Jahrhundert, archeologische Zeugnisse*, *Actes XI Congrès International d'Archéologie Chrétienne* 1, Rome 1989, 429–457. M. Piccirillo, *Gruppi episcopali nelle tre Palestine e in Arabia*, *ibid.*, 459–502. B. Dufay, *Baptistères de campagne dans l'Antiochène*, *ibid.*, 637–650. Jean-Luc Biscop, *Deir Déhè, Monastère d'Antiochène, Étude architecturale*, *Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique CXLVIII*, Beyrouth 1997.
 - 13 N. Duval, *L'architecture chrétienne en Jordanie*, in K. Painter (ed.), *Churches Built in Ancient Times*, London 1994, 149–212.
 - 14 Figures from Walmsley, *Byzantine Palestine and Arabia*, *cit.* (n. 7), 125–158, on p. 138.
 - 15 J. Wood, A. Northedge (eds.), *Studies on Roman and Islamic Amman 1, History, Site and Architecture*, Oxford 1992, 125–127.
 - 16 K.G. Holum, R.L. Hohlfelder, *King Herod's Dream: Caesarea on the Sea*, New York 1988, 175–176. Y. Tsafir, G. Foerster, *Bet Shean Excavation Project*, "Excavations and Surveys in Israel" 9, 1991, 120–128; the same authors, *City centre (North)*, "Excavations and Surveys in Israel" 11, 1993, 3–32. N. Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem*, Oxford 1984, 213–246.
 - 17 E.g. M. Avi-Yonah, *The Madaba Mosaic Map*, Jerusalem 1954. J.G. Dekkers, *Darstellungen der christlichen Stadt*, *Actes XI Congrès International d'Archéologie Chrétienne* 11, Rome 1989, 1283–1304.

Scythopolis.¹⁸ There was nothing makeshift or illicit about the operation, which was evidently part of a major scheme of urban renewal early in the sixth century. But infilling of a less substantial kind became increasingly prevalent towards the end of the sixth century and later, and this may well reflect a weakening of municipal administration.

At Caesarea the building of shops into the colonnades of the monumental streets has not been observed, though building did encroach on the pedestrian way of *Decumanus* 3.¹⁹ At some time a large zone in the south of the city was abandoned, and subsequently laid out in garden plots with irrigation channels. Unfortunately the date when the Late Antique buildings of this area were abandoned is still uncertain. It could be that the ruralisation of part of Caesarea only occurred well into the 7th century, but it seems that no Arabic pottery has so far been found in the building remains of that area.²⁰ Whenever this happened, it was probably linked to a decline in trade which judged by ceramic evidence peaked in the 5th century, and shrank to almost nothing in the 7th.²¹ One would not have expected this in view of the fact that Caesarea was the most important military base and centre of administration in Palestine right up to the Arab conquest.²² The explanation for any reduction in the trade

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- 18 Foerster & Tsafir, "Excavations and Surveys in Israel", op. cit. (n. 16). 6, 32–42; 7/8, 21–22; 9, 126–128. For a wider view of the transformation of porticoes, changes in the street network, and the encroachment on public spaces, see Saradi, *The Byzantine City in the Sixth Century*, (n. 9 above), 271–93.
 - 19 Y. Porath, *The evolution of Caesarea's south-west zone: new evidence*, in A. Raban, K.G. Holum (eds.), *Caesarea Maritima: A Retrospective after Two Millennia*, Leiden – New York – Cologne 1996, 105–129, esp. 116–117.
 - 20 K.G. Holum, A. Raban, J. Patrich (eds.), *Caesarea Papers* II, *Herod's temple, the praetorium and granaries, the later harbour, a gold coin hoard and other studies*, JRA Suppl.35, Ann Arbor, 1999.
 - 21 J.P. Oleson, R.L. Hohlfelder, A.N. Sherwood, S.E. Sidebotham, *Artifactual evidence for the history of the harbour of Caesarea*, in Raban, Holum (eds.), *Caesarea Maritima*, 1996., 359–380, esp. summary 364–365; see also J.A. Blakely, *Towards the study of the economy of Caesarea Maritima*, *ibid.*, 327–345, esp. 338 fig. 3: few amphorae imported 525–575; J.P. Oleson, M.A. Fitzgerald, A.N. Sidebotham, et al., *The Harbour of Caesarea* II, BAR Int. 599, Oxford 1994, esp. 79 and 159.
 - 22 Information from J. Patrich (U. of Haifa): suggested explanations: a. After-effect of Samaritan revolts in 529–530 and 556. b. The interruption of the aqueduct through subsidence on marshy ground. Otherwise K.G. Holum, *Archaeological evidence for the fall of Byzantine Caesarea*, BASOR 286, (1992), 73–85. In a letter to the author Holum stressed the shortage of dating evidence, and suggests that the major destructive layer is more likely to date from c. 741 than the 6th century, but could be later still, and need not be evidence of hostile attack.

of Caesarea could be that the harbour walls were subsiding and the inner harbour silting up, so that the port was becoming unattractive for shipping. So the decline of the Caesarea probably had local causes, and need not reflect deteriorating conditions in the region of Palestine as a whole.

Among the Arabian sites those of Bostra²³ and Gerasa²⁴ are exceptionally informative because they not only have extensive remains of buildings, but also have produced many late inscriptions. In both places there was considerable building activity in Late Antiquity, in each city reaching a peak in the first half of the 6th century. At Bostra most of the building was military or ecclesiastical. The walls were maintained, and many churches built, some to a sophisticated design, but generally, as is characteristic of building in this period, using spolia rather than stone cut for the purpose. Political life shows the same trends as elsewhere. The civic magistrates are last mentioned, in connection with building projects in 320 and 325.²⁵ The council does not figure in late inscriptions at all, but there is reference to a decurion supervising work on the governor's palace as late as 490.²⁶ Some building work was financed by individuals who were neither decurions nor officials.²⁷ Goldsmiths and silversmiths are mentioned as taking part in the administration of building (9129, 9134). Most secular work was ordered by the military commanders.²⁸ Some work was ordered by the *magister militum per Orientem*.²⁹ The emperor Justinian provided financial support for a great deal of building at Bostra, for restoration of an aqueduct, for work on fortifications, for at least one church and for an almshouse.³⁰ It is significant that the bishop was involved in the administration not only of the building of churches, but also of secular and military work: a subsidy for fortification had been urged to the emperor by the bishop on an embassy,³¹ and he played some part—though short of actually supervising the work—in the construction of new city's defences.³²

23 M. Sartre, *Inscriptions Grecques et Latines de la Syrie* XIII, 1, *Bostra*, Paris 1982; Id., *Bostra des origines à l'Islam*, Paris 1985.

24 C.H. Kraeling, *Gerasa, City of the Decapolis*, American School of Oriental Research, New Haven 1938.

25 Sartre (1982) = *IGLS* XIII, 1, nr. 9111–9112. Unfortunately many Bostra inscriptions were found out of their original context.

26 Ibid. 9123.

27 Ibid. 9124, church or chapel built by a *notarius*.

28 Ibid. 9115–9116, 9127: *duces*.

29 Ibid. 9118 of 438.

30 Ibid. 9127–9137; Procop. *Aed.* V 9.

31 Ibid. 9134.

32 Ibid. 9130, 9135, 9136.

The pattern of activities witnessed by inscriptions from Gerasa is very similar to that at Bostra, though here the epigraphic evidence has been supplemented by the evidence of excavation.³³ Temples were abandoned but not systematically destroyed: much of the temple of Zeus survived until the early 20th century. In the 2nd half of the 6th century what had been the lower terrace of the temple was occupied by workshops and rural housing.³⁴ The two theatres decayed. Part of the former hippodrome ceased to be used for public entertainment, and the disused area was invaded by simple houses, workshops and even burials. Parts of the *cavea* of the hippodrome collapsed.³⁵ There was encroachment of various kinds on the monumental colonnades. Perhaps as early as the end of the 4th century, makeshift structures had invaded the south *cardo* and the oval forum.³⁶ They are now no longer visible since their remains were removed in the course of the excavations in the early 1930s.³⁷ There was a considerable amount of new building in the later 5th and early 6th centuries. This included work on fortification, ordered by a military commander, but there also was non military building. A bathhouse was built at the expense of an *agens in rebus*. A portico was put up by a *scholasticus* and the *defensor* in 447 AD.³⁸ In 454/457 bishop Placcus paid for a small baths complex next to the cathedral.³⁹ No fewer than thirteen churches are known. At least seven churches date from the sixth century: three from the years 529–533,⁴⁰ and four others dated by mosaic inscriptions to respectively 559,⁴¹ 565, 570⁴² and 611.

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- 33 F.H. Kraeling, *Gerasa, City of the Decapolis*, Newhaven 1938; I. Kehrbeck, Roman Gerasa from below, *ASCS* 32,1–12. F. Zayadine (ed.), *Jerash Archaeological Project*, Part I: 1981–1983, Amman 1986; Part II: 1984–88, Paris 1989.
- 34 J. Seigne, *Recherches sur le sanctuaire de Zeus à Jérash (Octobre 1982–Décembre 1983)*, in Zayadine (ed.), *Jerash*, cit. (n. 33), 29–105; Id., *Jérash sanctuaire de Zeus*, RBib 93, 1986, 239–247.
- 35 A.A. Ostrasz, *The hippodrome of Gerasa, a report on excavations and research 1982–87*, “Syria” 66, 1989, 51–77. For a general overview of the growth and decline of hippodromes and theatres in the east see Saradi, *The Byzantine City in the Sixth Century* 2006 (n. 9 above), 295–324.
- 36 Kraeling, *Gerasa*, cit. (n. 33), 157.
- 37 M. Gawlikowsky, *Installations Omeyyades à Jérash*, SAHJ 4, 1992, 357–361.
- 38 Kraeling, *Gerasa*, cit. (n. 33), nr. 275.
- 39 Kraeling, *Gerasa*, cit. (n. 33), nr. 296.
- 40 St. George: Kraeling, *Gerasa*, cit. (n. 33), 309–310, S.S. Cosmas, Damianus: 306–307, Synagogue Church: 323–324.
- 41 V.A. Clark, *The Church of bishop Isaiah at Jerash*, in Zayadine (ed.), *Jerash*, cit. (n. 33), 303–342.
- 42 M. Galikowski & A. Musa, *The church of bishop Marianos*, in Zayadine (ed.), *Jerash*, cit. (n. 33), 137–153.

The latest record of building at Gerasa dates from 629.⁴³ No doubt the Church made a major contribution to the expense of building, but individual donors, lay and clerical, are mentioned too. So much activity, in what was not a provincial capital, bears witness to a generally flourishing condition of cities in this region.⁴⁴

Nevertheless a qualification must be made. The building on public space need not be proof that the population of the city was still growing. There is evidence that large areas around the northern *decumanus* and the north theatre were abandoned around the end of the fifth century.⁴⁵ The houses and workshops occupying part of the hippodrome were already abandoned in the middle of the 6th century, and those on the terrace of Zeus in the middle of the 7th.⁴⁶ The cathedral, in the centre of the town, was badly damaged by fire in the late 6th or early 7th century and in the subsequent restoration five western bays were not rebuilt.⁴⁷ At Bostra the apparent cessation of building around 540–541, that is just before the plague, may suggest that the city did not fully recover from that disaster.⁴⁸ At Petra the agora was destroyed in an earthquake in 363, and it appears never to have been rebuilt.⁴⁹ So while in the later

43 Zayadine (ed.), *Jerash*, cit. (n. 33), 16–18, 137–162, 303–341. Judging by available evidence the church building at Gerasa in the 6th century was much more impressive than that of the famous cities of Asia Sardis, Miletus, Pergamum and even Ephesus—apart from the church of St. John.

44 M. Whittow, *Ruling the late Roman and early Byzantine city*, P&P 129, 1990, 3–29, relevant 14–18; H. Kennedy, *From Polis to Medina, urban change in Late Antiquity and Early Islamic Syria*, P&P 106, 1985, 3–27.

45 W. Ball, J. Bowsher, I. Kehrberg, A. Walmsley, P. Watson, in Zayadine (ed.), *Jerash*, cit. (n. 33), 351–393, summary 392–393. Cf. P. Watson, *Byzantine occupation in areas III & IV*, in A.W. McNicoll, P.C. Edwards et al., *Pella in Jordan* 11, Sydney 1992, 163–181.

46 A.M. Rasson & J. Seigne, *Une citerne byzantine-omeyyade sur le sanctuaire de Zeus*, “Syria” 66, 1989, 117–167; Ostrasz, *The hippodrome of Gerasa*, cit. (n. 35), 51–77, esp. 74–77.

47 B. Brenk, C. Jäggi, H.-R. Meier, *The buildings under the cathedral of Gerasa: The second interim report of the Jerash Cathedral Project*, “Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan” 39, 1995, 211–220; and same authors, with a contribution by I. Kehrberg: *New date for the chronology of the early Christian cathedral at Gerasa, third interim report*, *ibid.* 41, 1997, 311–320. Note also that the Propylaea Church of 565 was built across the road leading to one of only two bridges across the Chrysorhoas, and thus blocked a principal road link between the two halves of the city.

48 The latest inscriptions: *IGLS XIII*, 1, 540–541, but Bostra has not been excavated.

49 L. Koenen, *The carbonised archive of Petra*, *JRA* 9, 1996, 177–191, relevant 187, see also Z.T. Fiema, *Culture history of the Byzantine ecclesiastical complex at Petra*, *ACOR Newsletter* 7/2, 1995, 1–3: the ecclesiastical complex was destroyed after 582, the latest date on a papyrus from the archive, and it was not rebuilt. See also Z.T. Fiema, *The church, the papyri*,

6th century the cities of Arabia and Palestine were certainly in a much better state than those of northern Syria it may be that they too had passed their peak of population and prosperity. Nevertheless it does seem to be the case that unlike northern Syria, Palestine and Arabia appear to have continued to enjoy much of their Late Antique prosperity through the 6th century to the time of the Arab conquest, and even beyond that. Moreover in villages churches were still being built after they had ceased to be erected in cities. To the south of Gerasa church building continued into the seventh century, and in villages around Madaba until 756 and 785.⁵⁰ Looking at the evidence available at the time of writing, it still seems that on the whole, it was the end of the Umayyad dynasty in 750, and the transfer of the capital of the caliphate from Damascus to Bagdad which marked a turning point in the condition of both towns and villages in Syria, Palestine and Arabia—and not only there.⁵¹

The question arises how the flourishing condition of villages affected cities. On the view that the Greco-Roman city was a consumer city, existing parasitically at the expense of the countryside, prosperity in cities would necessarily result in impoverished villages and *vice versa*. This was certainly not the case in the late Late Roman Near East. By far the best known part of the region is the North Syrian limestone massif with its hill-villages about which G. Tchalenko wrote a classic study forty years or so ago. Recent work, of which that of G. Tate is the most important by far, has somewhat modified Tchalenko's conclusions.⁵² Tchalenko's view that the 'Massif' was cultivated largely by peasant proprietors

and the Late Byzantine-Early Islamic Petra, the *Petra Church Project Publication*, vol. 1. ch. 22, Helsinki 2008.

50 In northern Syria there was very little building of any kind in the villages on the limestone massif after 600.

51 This is the impression left by Zayadine (ed.), *Jerash*, cit. n. 33 above for Gerasa. But see A.G. Walmsley, *Fihl, Pella and the cities of North Jordan during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods*, SAHJ 4, 1992, 377–384; See also Id., *The social and economic regime at Fihl (Pella) between the 7th and 9th centuries*, in P. Canivet and J.-P. Rey Coquais (eds.), *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam, VII^e & VIII^e siècles*, Inst. Franç. de Damas, Damascus 1992, 249–261. D. Whitcomb, *Reassessing the archaeology of Jordan in the Abbasid period*, SAHJ 4, 1992, 385–38. For a wider discussion of the decline of the classical city- or if you prefer- its transformation into the medieval Byzantine city, see Saradi, *The Byzantine City in the Sixth Century*, (n. 9 above). 441–470.

52 G. Tate, *Les campagnes de la Syrie du nord du II^e au VII^e siècle* I, Paris 1992; P.-L. Gatier, *Villages du Proche Orient Protobyzantin (4^{ème}–7^{ème} s.)*, in G.R.D. King & A. Cameron (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East 11, Land Use and Settlements Patterns: Papers of the second Workshop on Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, Studies in Late and Early Islam I, Princeton 1994, 17–48; supplemented by C. Foss, *The Near Eastern countryside in Late Antiquity, a review article*, JRA Suppl. 14, Ann Arbor 1995, 213–234.

seems to have held. Few estates have been identified, either by inscriptions or by property walls. The villages were not linked by a road network, only by tracks, apart from the road from Antioch to Chalkis, which bisects the massif. The villages had neither shops nor workshops. Tchalenko's identification of specialised buildings have been disproved. The villages were simply assemblies of peasants' dwellings, the roads mere paths, the open spaces no more than unbuilt on pieces of land. The structures identified by Tchalenko as communal were in most cases not such at all.

It has also now been established that the economy of the hill villages did not from the start depend overwhelmingly on the monoculture of olives. The villagers engaged in arable farming and animal rearing as well as the growing of vines and olive plantations. In the course of the fifth and early sixth centuries the importance of the olive sector increased. It was this which made it possible to maintain a very much enlarged population without seemingly reducing the standard of living. But production of oil was nearly always on a farm or domestic scale, there were no large units of the kind found in North Africa.⁵³ The effect of this revision of Tchalenko is to make it likely that the north Syrian cities provided an adequate market for the oil produced on the massif. Development of the oil production in this area, in contrast to the production of wine around Gaza, was not driven by overseas exports. This means that the prosperity of the countryside, indeed the viability of the economy of the countryside, was closely linked to that of the North Syrian cities. It follows that far from being oppressed and exploited by the cities these villages prospered by servicing them.

The growth of population in North Syrian villages, as evidenced by the building of dwellings, came to an end in the middle of 6th century, as a result of recurrences of the Justinianic plague and of deportation by the Persians. Ambitious church building continued to the end of the century. There are practically no new inscriptions and very few signs of occupation clearly datable after 600. But the conclusion that the area was rapidly abandoned does seem to have been a mistake. The important excavation at Déhé shows that collapse was not sudden after the Persian invasion, and Arab conquest.⁵⁴ Occupation of that site continued through the 7th and 8th centuries. Money economy continued too. But there is no evidence of new buildings, whether of secular structures, or of churches, or of mosques. Thicker sediments suggest

53 O. Callot, *Huilleries antiques de la Syrie du nord*, Paris 1984; so also Tate, *Les campagnes*, cit. (n. 52), 249. On Africa see the survey of work in D.J. Mattingly & R.B. Hitchner, *JRS* 85, 1995, 189–195, 198–204.

54 J.-P. Sodini, G. Tate, et al., *Déhès, recherches sur l'habitat rural*, *Syria* 27, 1980, 1–303.

an inferior quality of occupation. The impression is that the village underwent a long slow decline.⁵⁵ Clearly a great many more sites need to be excavated. It would also be worth while for someone to make a detailed survey of the villages on the basalt massif of the kind Tchalenko and Tate have made of the villages on the limestone hills.

So it would seem that in northern Syria the prosperity of cities and villages were closely related. Both flourished until the Persian invasions of Syria of 540, the capture of Antioch, and the deportation of large numbers of its inhabitants. This was followed by repeated visitations of plague, and a lasting weakening of the cities of northern Syria in the second half of the sixth century. Growth of the population of the villages, as witnessed by new domestic building had been slowing down since the 480s. It could obviously not have gone on indefinitely, but the end of growth coincided with the weakening of Antioch and the other cities of the region. The disasters suffered by Antioch did not produce a rapid fall of the population of the villages immediately. But within sixty years or so there was a cessation of all building and even of the setting up of inscribed tombstones. The almost complete absence of visible remains dating after 600 is in the sharpest possible contrast with the abundant remains of the previous 250 years.⁵⁶

In Arabia and Palestine too, cities and the villages situated in their large territories prospered together. What is more, when after the end of the Umayyad period sedentary occupation of the territories along the whole of the desert fringe of Syria/Palestine went into decline, cities and villages were affected alike, even though here—as further north—church building continued longer in some villages than it did in towns.⁵⁷ In Tripolitania both the agricultural

55 Sodini, Tate et al., *Déhès: Campagnes 1–3, 1976–78*, Paris 1981. The decline of this highly developed and specialised area perhaps could be compared with that of Campania, (see P. Arthur, *The Romans in Northern Campania*, Archaeological Monographs of the British School at Rome 1, London 1991) though the much more favourable conditions of soil and rainfall in that areas limited the reduction of cultivation and population.

56 Tate, *Les campagnes*, cit. (n. 55), 333–342.

57 For rural decline see survey evidence: S. Mittmann, *Beiträge zur Siedlungs und Territorialgeschichte des nördlichen Ostjordanlandes*, Wiesbaden 1970; R.D. Ibach, *Hesban v*, Archaeological Survey of the Hesban Region, Berrien Springs 1978; M. Ibrahim, J. Sauer, K. Yassine, *The East Jordan Valley Survey 1975*, BASOR 222, 1976, 41–66. J.M. Miller, *Archaeological survey of central Moab*, BASOR 234, 1979, 43–52; B. Macdonald, *The Wadi al Hesa Survey*, *Biblical Archaeologist* 44, 1981, 60–61.

exploitation, and the decline, started much earlier, but here too rural and urban regression were parallel.⁵⁸

There is no obvious reason why things should have been different in Asia Minor. It is *a priori* likely that here too the decline in town and country were related. But the onset of the decline of villages in Anatolia—as that of Anatolian towns—is very difficult to date. The mud-brick walls of the villages of, say, Phrygia or Pisidia have not left substantial remains like those which are so striking a feature of eastern Syria, Arabia and Cilicia; and the epitaphs, which give such a vivid view of a Christian society in central Anatolia in the third and fourth centuries, do not continue far into the fifth.

That villages and cities prospered together does not necessarily mean that the balance of distribution of population and wealth between city and country remained unchanged. The villages of the limestone massif in northern Syria increased the creation of wealth absolutely by increasing their production of olive oil for sale sold to the neighbouring cities.⁵⁹ It is conceivable, and perhaps even likely, that more wealthy people had their main residence in villages than had been the case in earlier times, and that more wealth was spent in the countryside, not least the income of monasteries. In the Oxhyrynchite nome of Egypt we hear of a large number of place names for the first time in the sixth century.⁶⁰ Similarly the names of at least 117 settlements in the Fayum do not occur on documents before the 5th century.⁶¹ Rathbone argues that the new settlements cannot reflect an increase in population as by 500 Egypt already had as large a population as could be fed by its agriculture. So the inhabitants of the new settlements must have moved there from the cities. He suggests that many of the new settlements housed workers on the great estates that came into existence in late Late Antiquity.⁶² If he is right, the fifth and sixth centuries in Egypt saw a reversal of the process which from the second to the fourth century had made the villages politically and economically dependent on the growing cities, the *metropoleis*. Meanwhile in the villages temples decayed, literate leaders left the villages, and craftsmen found more profitable use of their skills in towns.⁶³ If this tide turned in late Late Antiquity, so that

58 D.J. Mattingly, *Tripolitania*, London 1995; D.J. Mattingly, J.A. Lloyd, *Libya: Research in Archaeology, Environmental History and Society*, London 1989, esp. 146.

59 Tate, *Les campagnes*, cit. (n. 55), 315–320.

60 P. Pruneti, *I centri abitati dell'Ossirinchite: Repertorio toponomastico*, Firenze 1981.

61 Grenfell & Hunt, *P.Tebt.* 11, p. 361.

62 D.W. Rathbone, *Villages, land and population in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, PCPhS 36, 1990, 103–142, esp. 122.

63 R.S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, Princeton 1993, 314–319.

villages came to benefit from some redistribution of population or wealth, or of both, in their favour, archaeologists have not so far found evidence of the fact in the cities of Palestine and Arabia.⁶⁴ In northern Syria—as we have seen—a weakening of cities in the second half of the sixth century coincided with economic and demographic stagnation in the villages of the massif, and not with expansion. We are of course still a very long way from being able to establish the existence of any but the very largest shifts of population from town to country, or *vice versa*, archaeologically.

Change was very much less conspicuous in the areas conquered by the Arabs. The long term effect of the Arab conquest was to impose an Arab tribal culture where previously a late hellenistic urban culture had been dominant. The structure of existing cities, and the agricultural exploitation of the countryside, were not immediately affected, though a reduction in the number of rural sites in marginal areas on the desert fringe, in fact in precisely the areas which had been developed so dramatically in the early Byzantine period, seems to have set in under the Abbasids and Fatimids, i.e. after c. 750.⁶⁵

As we have seen the economies of the cities of northern Syria and of the villages of the massif were linked. In this area the prosperity of the cities ended before that of the villages: the cities flourished as long as the villages expanded, that is until around 550. Then while the villages stagnated, Antioch and other cities went into sharp decline. Plague, earthquakes and Persian raids, often involving deportation of large parts of the urban population, must account for the decline to a considerable extent, but perhaps not entirely. When the Arabs invaded the eastern provinces the cities of northern Syria were already in a very poor state. The depression, if that is the right word, was not limited to northern Syria. A drastic decline of settlements after 600 has also been noted by a field survey on the left bank of the Euphrates opposite Birecik in Mesopotamia.⁶⁶

64 But Sartre, *Bostra des origines à l'Islam*, Paris 1985, 136–138 shows that while building in villages has roughly the same profile as building in cities, the peak of building in villages was reached significantly later than in cities.

65 Essays in G.R.D. King & Averil Cameron (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East 2: Land Use and Settlement Patterns*, Princeton 1994; to be supplemented by the chapters of *The Roman and Byzantine Near East: some recent archaeological research*, JRA Suppl. 14, Ann Arbor 1995, and especially C. Foss, 'The Near Eastern countryside', op. cit. (n. 52), 213–234.

66 Kennedy, *The last century of Byzantine Syria*, *Byzantinische Forschungen* 10 (1985), 141–183; also *From Polis to Medina*, *Past and Present* 106, (1985), 3–27; and *Antioch from Byzantium to Islam*, in J. Rich (ed.), *The City in Late Antiquity*, London 1992, 181–198. T.J. Wilkinson, *Town and Country in Southern Anatolia 1*, Chicago 1990, summarized 117–129. See also his *Land use and settlement patterns in Late Sassanian and Early Islamic Iraq*,

In Northern Jordan too the countryside came to be extremely densely settled in Byzantine period. Mittmann found 208 Byzantine sites against 103 Roman sites, and only 95 modern sites.⁶⁷ Most, but not all, villages in the southern Hauran provide evidence of continued habitation 550–750. Umm al-Jimal displayed explosive growth from the 5th–7th century. Fourteen churches and two monasteries have been found in what was constitutionally not a city but a village. The collapse of buildings in the southern part of the settlement has been dated to the end of the Umayyad period, and attributed to the earthquake of 747/748. They were not rebuilt.⁶⁸

Among the cities of the decapolis, Pella,⁶⁹ Gadara,⁷⁰ Abila,⁷¹ Capitolias,⁷² provide evidence of prosperity up to the Arab conquest, and the sites continued to be busily occupied after. Most of the cities were eventually struck by disaster and, as has been thought, at more or less the same time. The destruction is generally attributed to the earthquake of 747/748. None of the towns seems to have fully recovered from this calamity, but occupation of many sites continued. It may well be that the impact of the earthquake as well as that of the near contemporary end of the Umayyad dynasty have been exaggerated. The reduction of these quite spectacular Late Roman cities to a more, much more modest and village-like condition may well have been a gradual process.

in King & Cameron (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, cit. (n. 52), 221–229. A good general view of the reversal of urban and rural growth in the eastern provinces: Saradi, *The Byzantine City in the Sixth Century* (n. 9 above), 38–44.

67 S. Mittmann, *Beiträge zur Siedlungs und Territorial-Geschichte des nördlichen Ostjordanlandes*, Wiesbaden 1970.

68 H.I. MacAdam, *Settlements and settlement-patterns in northern and central Transjordan c. 550–750*, in King & Cameron, (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, cit. (n. 52), 48–93, relevant 57–58. For a fuller account see B. de Vries (ed.), *Umm El-Jimal: A Frontier Town and its Landscape in Northern Jordan 1: Fieldwork 1972–1981*, JRA Suppl. 26, Ann Arbor 1998; D.L. Kennedy, *The area of Umm el-Jimal: maps, air photographs, and surface survey*, in de Vries (ed.), *Umm El-Jimal*, cit., 39–90. But Umm al Jimal, and other sites mentioned later, may well have had a history under the Abbasid's and Fatimids which has been overlooked by archaeologists as a result of insufficient knowledge of Islamic pottery sequences.

69 A. McNicoll, R.H. Smith, B. Henessey, *Pella in Jordan* 1, Canberra 1982; A. McNicoll, P.C. Edwards et al., *Pella in Jordan* 11, Sidney 1992. R.H. Smith, L.P. Day, *Pella of the Decapolis* 11, *Final Report*, Wooster 1989. A. Walmsley, *Pella/Fihl after the Islamic conquest*, *MedArch* 1, 1988, 143–153.

70 B. Mershen, E.A. Knauf, *From Gadar to Umm qais*, *ZPAV* 104, 1988, 128–132.

71 MacAdam, *Settlements*, cit. (n. 68), 76–77.

72 E.A. Knauf, *Beit Ras/Capitolias: a preliminary evaluation of the archaeological and textual evidence*, *Syria* 64, 1987, 21–46.

For instance at Pella the decline of the three churches, and of the 'civic complex', appears to have begun well before 750.⁷³ Subsequently, if the earthquake put an end to the splendour of the city, it did not end its existence.⁷⁴

The city of Gerasa itself was changing. As we have seen earlier, change began long before the arrival of the Arabs. The city had gradually become more utilitarian in appearance, and it continued to evolve in the same direction. Potter's furnaces were built in the former sanctuary of Artemis.⁷⁵ Shops and public buildings came to be used as stables. Gerasa had become a major centre for the production of pottery. Under Umayyad rule a small mosque (10 × 13 m), was built, and around 660 a residential area was totally rebuilt in the southern part of the city.⁷⁶ Eight ceramic kilns were set up in the North Theatre, which had been disused since the fifth century.⁷⁷ The city now produced its own coins. Most of the structures that have been excavated were destroyed, and not rebuilt, at a date or dates usually assigned to the eighth century. There is at present little or no evidence for occupation beyond the 8th century. References in Arab geographers, and the survival of the name in an Arabised form prove that the site was not deserted.

Around Gerasa some remarkable late Roman villages have been found.⁷⁸ Among them are Rihab and Khirbat al Samra,⁷⁹ each with eight churches constructed between 533 and 635. Jordan's central plateau, like the regions to the north of it, was more densely populated in Byzantine times than before or since.⁸⁰ The same incidentally seems to have been true of the very much more

73 McNicoll, Edwards, et al., *Pella in Jordan*, cit. (n. 69), 144–198.

74 A.G. Walmsley, *Fihl (Pella) and the cities of North Jordan during the Umayyad and Abbasid Periods*, SHAJ IV, Amman 1992, 377–384; see also *The social and economic regime at Fihl (Pella)*, in *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam*, P. Cannivet & J.-P. Rey Coquais, Damascus 1992, 249–261.

75 J.W. Crowfoot's notes published in *Syria* 66, 1989, 37–39.

76 Zayadine (ed.), *Jerash*, cit. (n. 33), 120.

77 M. Gawlikowski, *Installations Omayyades à Jérash*, *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan* 4 (1992), 357–361; also *A residential area by the South decumanus*, in F. Zayadine (ed.), *Jerash Archaeological Project II: 1984–88*, Paris 1989, = "Syria" 66, 1989, 107–136.

78 MacAdam, *Settlements*, cit. (68), 73–75.

79 Plans: N. Duval, *L'Architecture chrétienne en Jordanie*, in K. Painter (ed.), *Churches Built in Ancient Times*, London 1994, 149–212, relevant 153–154.

80 R.D. Ibach, *Expanded Archaeological survey of the Hesban Region*, in R.S. Boraas & L.T. Gerarty (eds.), *Heshbon* 1976, Berrien Springs 1978, 201–213. Other references to field work in A. Northedge, *Studies on Roman and Byzantine Amman*, 1. *History, Site and Architecture*, Oxford 1992, 40, 50 and notes.

thinly populated territory of South Jordan.⁸¹ Amman/Philadelphia itself seems to have passed the peak of its prosperity in the fourth century.⁸² Although six churches are known from the city they were poorly built.⁸³ Under the Umayyads Amman once more gained in political importance, since it became the capital of an Arabic military district, or *jund*.⁸⁴ A palace and a mosque were built on the acropolis. The approximate area of the lower city in the Umayyad period, judging by the extent of surface debris, was 15.3 ha. The citadel covered an additional 9 ha., of which only 3.5 ha. were covered by buildings.⁸⁵ The palace dates from around 720, and was rebuilt after c. 750. Some time later, under Abbasids, the governor was withdrawn, and Amman became once more a small country town. This is what it was at time of the Crusades.

The villages of central Jordan have many remains of 6th century churches. At Quwaysma (Quweismeh) on the edge of modern Greater Amman there are two Byzantine churches, one with sumptuous mosaics and an inscription commemorating Stephanus, a tribune, who had evidently paid for the church.⁸⁶ Other village churches in the neighbourhood of Amman are evidence of that building continued through the 6th century and later still.⁸⁷ South west of Amman and in the Madaba plain there is an abundance of village remains.⁸⁸ At the heart of this area was the pilgrimage centre on Mount Nebo, the site of the tomb of Moses, with a monastery and several churches. At the city of Madaba no fewer than eleven churches have been found, dating from the 6th and 7th centuries.⁸⁹ At Umm el Rassas there are remains of churches and fine

81 R. Schick, *The settlement pattern of southern Jordan: the nature of the evidence*, in King & Cameron (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, cit. (52), 133–154, tracing the use of dated tombstones. The earliest is from 375 AD. The stones become more abundant through the 5th century, and are most frequent in the second half of the 6th. Their use fades out after the Arab conquest.

82 Northedge, *Studies on Roman and Byzantine Amman*, cit. (n. 80), 39–45.

83 Northedge, *Studies on Roman and Byzantine Amman*, cit. (n. 80), 59–60.

84 Northedge, *Studies on Roman and Byzantine Amman*, cit. (n. 80), 71–104. On the *Jund*, plural *Ajnâd*, see J. Haldon, *Seventh century continuities: The Ajnâd and the thematic myth* in Averil Cameron (ed.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East III: States, Resources and Armies*, Princeton 1995, 379–423, relevant 381–383 and fig. 2.

85 Northedge, *Studies on Roman and Byzantine Amman*, cit. (n. 80), 61.

86 *IJ* II, 54b.

87 Northedge, *Studies on Roman and Byzantine Amman*, cit. (n. 80), 42.

88 MacAdam, *Settlements*, cit. (n. 68), 80–84.

89 P.-L. Gatier, *Inscriptions de la Jordanie* II = *IGLS* XXI, Paris 1986, 87–89, 93–94, 101–105, 109–111, 125–126, 127–138, 141–146, 179, 186, 189.

mosaics.⁹⁰ One mosaic has 18 views of Jordanian cities.⁹¹ It was here in the church of St Stephen that a mosaic dated to 785 has been found, the latest in the whole area. The mosaics in this church were disfigured by iconoclasts, later repaired, and even the repairs show traces of wear. Eventually the building was abandoned, but it is still uncertain when.⁹²

In Israel, the Roman Palestine, villages and towns flourished in the late Late Roman period. Numerous mosaic floors witness to the building of churches in villages, especially in the area between Caesarea and Beyruth, and in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem.⁹³ Impressive remains of late Roman villages have been found in the Negev,⁹⁴ in Galilee and on the Golan heights.⁹⁵ Rural occupation in Palestine in the 5th and 6th centuries was much denser than in the third and fourth, but perhaps not denser than under the Early Empire.⁹⁶ The houses on the circumference of large villages were built one against the other to form a continuous wall round the settlement. In this and other respects they conform to the rules laid down in rabbinic texts.⁹⁷ Occupation continues after the Arab conquest, but at least in some areas decline set in. At Nessana in the Negev papyrological evidence ends abruptly in 700, and no archaeological data can be placed later than 750.⁹⁸ In the East Jordan valley a survey found 19 sites for the Umayyad period against 55 from the Byzantine, in the Hisban survey 29 against 133.⁹⁹ Northedge suggests that this rapid decline in occupation could be explained by soil-exhaustion. It may however be that archaeologists are not yet sufficiently familiar with the chronology of Islamic material, and that it is

90 M. Piccirillo, *Les églises paléochrétiennes d'Umm el-Rassas: cinq campagnes de fouilles*, CRAI 1991, 273–294.

91 M. Piccirillo, *Il complesso di Santo Stefano à Umm el-Rassas-Kastron Mefaa in Giordania*, *Liber Annuum*, Studium Biblicum Franciscanum 41, Jerusalem 1991, 327–364.

92 On latest building, and eventual abandonment see Duval, *L'architecture chrétienne en Jordanie*, in K. Painter (ed.), *Churches Built in Ancient Times*, London 1994, 205–208; M. Piccirillo & E. Alliata, *Umm al-Rasas, Scavi del Complesso di Santo Stefano*, Jerusalem 1994. The date of abandonment is still obscure.

93 P. Doncel Voûte, *Les pavements des églises byzantines du Syrie et du Liban*, Louvain 1988, esp. 14. Remarkably few have been found north of Beirut.

94 J. Shereshevski, *Byzantine Urban Settlements in the Negev Desert*, Beer Sheva 1991, and Foss, *The Near Eastern countryside*, cit. (n. 52), 223–234.

95 C. Dauphin, *Les komai de Palestine*, “Proche Orient Chrétien” 3, 1987, 257–267.

96 See C. Dauphin, *La Palestine byzantine* II, BAR.IS 726, Oxford 1998, figs. 1–6.

97 *Tosephta*, Makot 3.8 cited by C. Dauphin cit. (n. 96).

98 C.J. Kraemer, *Excavations at Nessana* III, Princeton 1958, 35.

99 Northedge, *Studies on Roman and Byzantine Amman*, cit. (n. 80), 50.

this, here and elsewhere, that has led them to overlook evidence of Abbasid and Fatimid occupation.

The development of cities in Palestine is well illustrated by the archaeology of Scythopolis.¹⁰⁰ The temples were allowed to fall into ruins, and the hippodrome was converted into an amphitheatre in the second half of the fourth century. A few decades later the building lost its monumental appearance. Housing crowded against its structure and partly blocked the entrances, but the arena itself remained free from buildings until early Islamic period. The odeon, which probably had also served as a *bouleuterion*, was pulled down in the 6th century to make way for a commercial piazza. Statues were removed and mutilated. Churches and monasteries and two synagogues were built on the fringes of the city. But Hellenism was not dead. Mosaic floors in shops of the 6th century could still display mythological themes, like an image of Tyche, the goddess of fortune, or the sirens tempting Odysseus. Scythopolis was capital of Palaestina Secunda. In the course of Late Antiquity the city underwent major growth. It acquired new suburbs, while the centre became more densely occupied. The Late Roman wall which cannot be dated precisely enclosed 134 ha., and there were suburbs beyond the walls of totalling perhaps 20 ha. The population of Late Antique Scythopolis has been estimated at 30–40,000.¹⁰¹

The reigns of Anastasius (AD 491–518) and Justin I (AD 518–527) saw a climax of monumental building. A new agora was constructed on the site of a *basilica*. At the request of an embassy of two Samaritan citizens, the Emperor Anastasius donated money for the building of a large hall, 60 meters long and 29 m wide, on what had previously been an ornamental pool reflecting the columns of a monumental colonnade. The hall was part of a larger project which involved the repaving and extension of an earlier monumental street (described in archaeological literature as Commercial Street or Silvanus Street) to link the civic centre to the district on the southern plateau. This was large scale urban renewal. The destruction of the odeon was part of another major project of this period (AD 506–507). It involved the construction of a semicircular shopping centre, opening out from the colonnade in what the excavators

100 Y. Tsafir & G. Foerster, *From Scythopolis to Baysan, changing concepts of urbanism*, in King & Cameron (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, cit. (n. 52), 95–122. Earlier publications are updated in important respects in Y. Tsafir & G. Foerster, *Urbanism at Scythopolis-Bet Shean, fourth to seventh centuries*, DOP 51, 1997, 85–146, with clear photographs—on which the following is based.

101 G. Mazor, *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 6, (1988), 19.

have called Palladius Street. At Scythopolis, as elsewhere in Palestine,¹⁰² and as at Aphrodisias, notables of the city might still occasionally finance public building; in AD 535 a colonnaded lane in the baths complex was financed by a local citizen. But as a rule credit for public building is given to governors. So an inscription of 522 credits the most magnificent Flavius Orestes, *archon* for the paving of the extended 'Commercial (Silvanus) Street', and the installation of new water pipes. Two notables, the *scholastici* Sallustius and Silvanus, are commemorated for getting the emperor Anastasius to give money for the building of the great hall in Silvanus Street, while the *clarissimus comes*, Silvinus son of Marinus, described as *prôtos*, supervised the building both of the semicircular shopping centre off Palladius Street (AD 506/507), and of the work on the extension of Silvanus Street (AD 521/522).

Encroachment by private houses on roads and public spaces gathered pace towards the end of the Roman period and eventually became quite general. A stage is reached where it is no longer proper to talk of urban renewal. What happened represents a loss of control by the civic authorities and/or the giving up of an ideal of what a city should look like. Houses were built on to the central square in front of the *nymphaeum*, which was evidently no longer functioning, and on to the pavement all along what had been monumental streets. The facades of colonnades and other monumental features now emerge from a mass of humble structures built against them. The so-called Valley street was eventually reduced from 12 meters of road to three meters. Inside these adventitious constructions the floor level rose much faster than it had done in earlier times. Meanwhile parts of abandoned public buildings were given over to industrial use. Potter's kilns, or fuller's basins, or the byproducts of metal working, are found in the solidly built interiors of abandoned monumental structures. The city took on a much more utilitarian appearance. This was not a sudden development. As early as the late fourth century the *propylaeon* of the processional way leading up to the temple of Zeus Akraios was blocked and given over to manufacture. Brick basins suggest that the building might have been used for the preparation of flax. But change does not exclude decline. It is significant that the monumental shopping complex, the so-called 'Palladian street', which had been rebuilt as recently as the early 6th century was

102 L. di Segni, *The involvement of local, municipal and provincial authorities in urban buildings in late antique Palestine and Arabia*, in *The Roman and Byzantine Near East* 11, cit. (n. 52), 312–332.

abandoned, towards the end of that century, or not far into the next. Under the Umayyads the site became a cemetery.¹⁰³

The earthquake of 749 left a destruction layer over the whole area of the city which has enabled the Israeli archaeologists to assess the condition of Scythopolis just before the disaster. At this time none of the secular public buildings of Roman and Byzantine times was still in use, and the industrial installations mentioned earlier were in place. Humble housing encroached on all the monumental streets. The chronology of this development is still far from clear. As we have seen the process started as early as the fourth century. It coexisted with major public building schemes at least until the reign of Justin I. Only two and much smaller schemes are dated to the reign of Justinian (AD 527–565). So the mid-sixth century, the period following the Samaritan revolts of AD 529 and 536, the first outbreak of plague in 541/542, and of the Persian invasion of northern Syria, was a turning point in the fortunes of Scythopolis.

Scythopolis may well have lost its classical character more quickly than other cities in the neighbourhood. After the city had resisted the Arabs, it was heavily fined and half its houses transferred to the victors, presumably to be given to settlers. Moreover the provincial capital was moved to Tiberias.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless the Arab conquest was not an unmixed disaster. Anastasius' *basilica* had been destroyed at some unknown date in the sixth or early seventh century, most likely by an earthquake, but on its site the caliph Hisham (AD 724–743) built a soukh with a fine late Antique colonnade.¹⁰⁵

The earthquake of 749 was not the end of the city. But even before the earthquake it had resumed its old semitic name of Baysan (Bet Shean) in place of the Greek Scythopolis. But the city was only rebuilt in part, and without regard for the old street plan. Small curving lanes now surrounded the irregular *insulae*. The core of the city moved to the southern plateau, where it has remained. But some of its buildings were large, and built around a court paved with basalt blocks.

103 King & Cameron (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East* II, cit. (n. 52), figs. 20–25 illustrate the encroachment. See the discussion in Tsafir & Foerster, *Urbanism at Scythopolis*, cit. (n. 52), 135–146, and figs. 47–51, 57, 59.

104 Cf. a similar story revealed by the archaeology at Sepphoris: E. Netzer, Z. Weiss, *New evidence for Late Roman and Byzantine Sepphoris*, in *The Roman and Byzantine Near East*, JRA Suppl. 14, (1995), 164–176.

105 On the Samaritan revolts of 529, 536 and the reign of Justin II see A.D. Crown, *The Samaritans*, Tübingen 1989. On the *soukh*, which earlier reports mistakenly described as the 'Byzantine street of shops', see Tsafir & Foerster, *Urbanism at Scythopolis*, cit. (n. 100), 138–139.

The development of Scythopolis/Bet Shean can be paralleled at cities all over Palestine. There was active public building early in the sixth century notably at Caesarea, Sepphoris and Jerusalem.¹⁰⁶ There was a significant reduction in the amount of new building in the second half of the century and in the early 7th century, but archaeologists have not so far found evidence that either town or country in Jordan or Palestine suffered a major set-back, before the second half of the eighth century.¹⁰⁷

It will have been observed that the immediate impact of the Arab conquest on the archaeology of the provinces of Palestine and Arabia was far from dramatic. In fact this momentous event is scarcely visible archaeologically. Plenty of pottery, coins, and artifacts bear witness to abundant urban activity under the Umayyads.¹⁰⁸ At Gerasa and Pella there is evidence of new residential building. Essentially cities continued to evolve under the Arabs in the same direction as they had done during the previous hundred years under the Empire. A small mosque has been found at Gerasa, a large one on the citadel at Amman.¹⁰⁹ At Damascus the Muslims built a mihrab in to what had been the colonnade of the *temenos* of the principal temple, whose *cella* had been converted into the cathedral of St John. The cathedral itself was replaced by the great mosque seventy years later.¹¹⁰ But there are far fewer remains of mosques in the ruins of towns and villages of this area than one would expect. The continuing decline of monumentality and encroachment on public spaces and streets points to population pressure rather than urban decline; though there has scarcely anywhere been enough excavation to assess whether, or to what extent, infilling in the town centre coincided with abandonment of peripheral districts. On the other hand encroachment on the scale seen at Scythopolis surely reflects a weakening of civic administration, and by implication the

106 R.L. Vann, *Byzantine street construction at Caesarea Maritima*, in R.L. Hohlfelder (ed.), *City and Countryside in the Early Byzantine Era*, New York, 1982, 165–177. D. Chen, *The dating of the cardo maximus excavated at Jerusalem*, *PEQ* 114, 1982, 43–45. Netzer-Weiss, *New evidence for Late Roman and Byzantine Sepphoris*, cit. (n. 100), 164–176.

107 H.Kennedy, *The last century of Byzantine Syria*, *Byzantinische Forschungen* 10 (1985), 141–183.

108 A. Zeyadeh, *Settlement patterns, an archaeological perspective: case studies from northern Palestine and Jordan*, in King & Cameron, *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East* 11, cit. (1994), 117–131.

109 Northedge, *Studies on Roman and Byzantine Amman*, cit. (n. 80), 63–69.

110 D. Sack, *Damascus, Entwicklung und Struktur einer orientalisches-islamischen Stadt*, Mainz 1989, 20. The mosque at El Bara in the North Syrian massif dates from as late as 1103–1104, see G. Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord* 1–111, Paris 1953–1958, 111, 115.

fading of the classical concept of the city as the property of its citizens,¹¹¹ and of its corollary the conviction that the community has a duty to maintain its rights against the claims of individuals. But this was a long term development. The dominating impression is one of continuity extending at least to the end of the Umayyad period, and the subsequent transfer of capital of the caliphate from Damascus to Bagdad.

There was something like a consensus among scholars that this changed after 750, the time of the Abbasid revolution, when the whole area was thought to have gone into a steep recession.¹¹² This conclusion, based largely on surface surveys, may however be distorted by the fact, mentioned earlier, that archaeologists had difficulty in recognising Abbasid and Fatimid pottery. As this difficulty is being overcome Abbasid and Fatimid pottery is being found on sites which earlier to archaeologists had seemed abandoned.¹¹³ It looks as if the consensus view will have to be revised. On the other hand most of the structures excavated at Gerasa were eventually destroyed without being replaced, and there is little or no positive evidence that they survived long into the Abbasid period and the same is true of many of the village churches in the area. Even if there is a question-mark over the chronology of the process there is little doubt that the extraordinary economic development undergone by the lands on the fringe of the desert in Late Antiquity went into reverse in the eighth and subsequent centuries.

It is also beginning to look as if there were indications of declining prosperity even before 750. Excavations of the last twenty years have found areas where signs of early decline could be registered in Arabia at Petra¹¹⁴ and Gerasa,¹¹⁵ and in Palestine at Pella, Scythopolis and Caesarea. It may be that the decline which is so conspicuous in northern Syria in the second half of the 6th century, happened further south too, though it set in later, and was less severe.

The decline of the great city of Alexandria in Egypt appears to have begun well before the mid-eighth century. The lively and prosperous district excavated by the Polish team at Kom el Dikka, with its baths, lecture-rooms, houses and

111 As expressed by the Latin term for the Roman state: *res publica*.

112 Northedge, *Studies on Roman and Byzantine Amman*, cit. (n. 80), 54–55.

113 Walmsley, *Fihl, Pella and the cities of North Jordan*, cit.; Whitcomb, *Reassessing the archaeology of Jordan*, cit. n. 51 above.

114 Z.T. Fiema, ACOR Newsletter 5.1, 1993, 1–3; Id., Chapter 20 in *Final Petra Church Publication*, forthcoming.

115 Zayadine (ed.), *Jerash*, cit. (n. 33), 12 (North *Decumanus* and north theatre), 59 (shops along eastern facade of sanctuary of Zeus complex).

workshops, was in ruins and covered with debris from the 7th century.¹¹⁶ While excavating the later layers the archaeologists found progressively less imported pottery from North Africa, Asia Minor and Cyprus, and a relative increase of pottery from Upper and Middle Egypt. Mediterranean trade was giving way to a regionalised exchange.¹¹⁷ Under the Arabs Alexandria suffered two further blows: after 868 Cairo became the capital of an independent Muslim Egypt, and first the canals linking Alexandria to the Canopic branch of the Nile, and then the Canopic branch itself, silted up. The Roman walls of Alexandria probably enclosed something like 1000 hectares, the 9th century wall no more than 300. By Western standards Alexandria was still a large city, but it was no longer the super-city of Late Antiquity and classical times.¹¹⁸

The sources have plenty of evidence that the Arab conquest was followed by large scale flight of Christian inhabitants of Jordan¹¹⁹ and Syria.¹²⁰ But it is possible that the extent of the flight of the former owners is exaggerated in the Arab sources.¹²¹ Certainly some families, in at least some cities, preserved their wealth and influence.¹²² In the case of the great majority of cities we have no prosopographical information at all. But chronicles have survived at Edessa in Mesopotamia, and they suggest that at least some of the families that were most powerful in Byzantine times, continued to be wealthy and influential under Islam, even though they had not abandoned their Monophysite Christianity. When, in the year 628, the emperor Heraclius recovered Edessa from the Persians, Isaiah the Monophysite patriarch, refused him communion

116 C. Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict*, Baltimore – London 1997, 342.

117 Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, cit. (n. 116), 343–344, citing G. Majcherek, *The late Roman ceramics from sector G-Alexandria* (1986–87), *Études et Travaux* 16, 1992, 81–117.

118 Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, cit. (n. 116), 339–351.

119 Baladhuri, Ahmad b. Yahà, *Kitab Futuh al-Buldan*, tr. in P.K. Hitti, *The Origin of the Islamic State*, Beirut 1966 (repr. of New York 1916), 180.

120 References in R.J. Lilie, *Die byzantinische Reaktion auf die Ausbreitung der Araber*, Berlin 1986, 231–234. Principal source: Baladhuri 189 ff., e.g. Damascus 196, coastal towns 198, Baalbek 201, Emesa 204, Antioch 230, Cyrrhus 231. At Apamea the great mansions were now converted into farm houses. So the leading families either fled or became impoverished, J.Ch. Balty, *Notes sur l'habitat Romain, Byzantin et Arabe d'Apamée: Rapport de synthèse*, in J. Balty (ed.), *Apamée de Syrie: Bilan de recherches archéologiques 1973–79*, Actes du colloque à Bruxelles, Mai 1980, Brussels 1984, 471–501. S. Borsari, *Le migrazioni dall'Oriente in Italia nel VII secolo*, pp. 17, 1957, 133–138.

121 Averil Cameron & L.I. Conrad (eds.), *The byzantine and Early Islamic Near East* 1, *Problems in the Literary Source material*, Princeton 1992.

122 A. Palmer, *Monks and Masons on the Tigris Frontier: The Early History of Tur Abdin*, Cambridge 1990, 166–167.

unless he anathematized the Council of Chalcedon. Angered by this unnecessary rebuff, which even the Monophysite chronicler Sergius considered idiotic, Heraclius expelled the bishop, and together with him five of the leading families of Edessa who were supporting the Monophysite cause. It may well be that Heraclius was not sorry to have been provoked: for the Monophysite bishops at Edessa and elsewhere owed their possession of the churches to the Persian king, who had evidently assumed that Monophysites would prefer his rule to that of the orthodox emperor.¹²³ The families were the Rospaye (Rusafôyô), the Tellmahraye (Tel Mahrôyô), the family of Cosma son of Araby and the family of Nôlar. These families had endowed the Great church of Edessa with gold, silver, shops, mills, gardens and public baths. They had evidently been rich and powerful for some time. Certainly already in 590, the later Persian king Chosroes II, then a refugee in the Roman Empire, had stayed in the palace of Ioannes Rospaya.¹²⁴ When Chosroes captured Edessa in 606 he deported Ioannes' son and heir Sergius 38, but invited him to eat at the royal table, even though he was prisoner. After some time Sergius was allowed to return to Edessa, and got much of his property back.¹²⁵ The Arab conquest in 640 evidently did not deprive the family of its position: in the late 7th century a woman of the Rospaye married in to the Tellmahraye family. A descendant of this marriage was the historian Dionysius of Tel-Mahre. He was metropolitan of Edessa 818–845, and his brother Theodosius was to hold the same office. The Tellmahraye were evidently still one of the leading families of Edessa. Towards the end of the 7th century the heiress of the Rospaye married a member of another, probably less ancient monophysite family, the Gummaye (Gumôyô), who had gained enormous wealth first as tutor to the brother of the Caliph Abdel Malik (684/685–705), and then as the brother's assistant and chief minister in the government of Egypt.¹²⁶ In 803/804 the Caliph Harun al Rashid forced the family to surrender a large part of its wealth, though he allowed them to keep some.¹²⁷

123 J.B. Segal, *Edessa the Blessed*, Oxford 1970, 126; A. Palmer, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, Liverpool 1993, Text nr. 13: Dionysius reconstituted, 41–43, 140–142.

124 Ibid., *Dionysius Reconstituted* 15–19, in Palmer, *The Seventh Century*, cit. (n. 124), 122–124, cf. *PLRE* III s.v. Ioannes 102.

125 *Dionysius Reconstituted*, 18–19, in Palmer, *The Seventh Century*, cit. (n. 124), 124.

126 Segal, *Edessa*, cit. (n. 123), 202; *Dionysius Reconstituted* 132–133, in Palmer, *The Seventh Century*, cit. (n. 124), 202–204: 4000 slaves, villages, estates, gardens, 300 shops in Edessa. He built two churches in Fustat in Egypt, and renovated the Church of the Mother of God at Edessa.

127 Segal, *Edessa*, cit. (n. 123), 203.

We know about the Rospaye—Tellmahraye—Gummaye cousinage because they wrote the history. Dionysius of the Tellmahraye obtained his information about earlier periods from the chronicle of his grandfather, David son of Samuel of Tur Abdin, and from writings of an earlier kinsman, Sergius 38, son of Ioannes of the Rospaye (fl. 627). There were other notable families at Edessa. When Chosroes in exile lived at Edessa he first stayed in the palace of Marinus which was in the same street as the mansion of Ioannes Rospaye. This was evidently one the largest houses in Edessa, for in 604 the general Narses chose it as his headquarters when he rebelled against Phocas. But we don't hear any more about Marinus, perhaps because he and his descendants were Chalcedonians.¹²⁸ But if the Rospaye and related families were typical, interesting conclusions follow. The Arab conquest did not cause a social revolution in Edessa. The city's patriciate, at least the monophysite part of it, retained its position. From time to time they suffered arbitrary and tyrannous exactions, rather like wealthy Jew in the medieval West. On one occasion in 770, the Gummaye were prosecuted at Harran for alleged paganism.¹²⁹ Three were executed, but the family survived. We get a glimpse of the comparable survival of a great Family into Arab times at Damascus, where one Sergounas (Sergius) was appointed to collect taxes by Maurice. His son Mansur appears to have held a similar position in 635 when he betrayed the city to the Arabs.¹³⁰ Later in the 7th century a Sergius son of Mansur, a Chalcedonian, was secretary of the calif Abd al Malik (685–705) at Damascus. In 691 he dissuaded the calif from removing pillars from the church at Gethsemane for building at Mecca.¹³¹ His son, John of Damascus (675–749), also served the Umayyads, but ended his life as a monk in the monastery of St. Sabas in Arab-held Palestine. He was a Chalcedonian theologian and a consistent opponent of iconoclasm.¹³²

It is significant that orthodox Christian communities flourished in 9th century Palestine. Unlike Monophysite ritual and theology, the liturgy of the orthodox (Melkites) was now in Arabic, and orthodox theologians, writing in Arabic, addressed Muslim criticism of Christian theology, for instance of ikon

128 *Dionysius Reconstituted* 15, in Palmer, *The Seventh Century*, cit. (n. 124), 122–123.

129 Segal, *Edessa*, cit. (n. 123), 206.

130 Eutychius, *Annales*, col. 1089, cf. *PLRE* IIIB, 1137, s.v. Sergounas (?Sergius); *ibid.*, 810, s.v. Mansur. Was the financial office held by father and son that of vindex? Or was it that of *logeutes* documented at Gerasa in 578, see Zayadine (ed.), *Jerash*, cit. (n. 33), 17–18.

131 *Dionysius Reconstituted* 134, in Palmer, *The Seventh Century*, cit. (n. 124), 204; Theoph. *Chron.* 6183.

132 I.P. Sheldon Williams, *Cambridge History of Later Greek Philosophy*, Cambridge 1967, 509–511.

worship. At this stage the gap between Islam and Christianity was not as wide as it later became. Muslims did not on principle object to holding their worship in churches, providing they contained no objectionable symbols such as representations of living beings.¹³³

No doubt one reason why Christian families of Edessa and Damascus could maintain their wealth and influence under the Muslim government was that the Umayyads took over much of the Roman administrative machinery, and therefore found it convenient to employ men who were used to running it. Moreover the Muslims did not as a rule quarter major armies in existing cities. They preferred to settle their soldiers in fully Muslim settlements. The settlements might be small or large, and they might be in close proximity to an existing city. But they ensured a certain segregation of Muslims from the non-Muslim inhabitants. Some of the settlements had urban dimensions and population from the start, others developed into cities in the course of time. Ramla in Palestine¹³⁴ and Qinnasrin (Grk. Chalcis) in Syria did not grow into major cities. But others did, and many have continued as great urban centres to this day, among them Baghdad, Basra and Cairo.

In the fact that they founded numerous new cities (*amsâr* sing. *mîsr*) the Arabs differed fundamentally from the barbarians who settled in the western provinces of the Empire. As the Muslim cities originated as settlements for tribal armies, separate areas were assigned to the different tribal units. So Arab cities were composed of distinct, self administering quarters and lacked the corporate unity of the classical city.

A striking feature of the Umayyad period in Jordan is the building of fort/palace complexes, some on the sites of Roman forts, far out in the east on the margin of the desert and the sown.¹³⁵ These were residences with gardens and agricultural centres, with extensive irrigation works. It has been suggested that they were built for leading members of the Umayyad clan and their followers, and financed from tax revenue. If so the subsidy was withdrawn after the

133 R. Schick, *The Christian Communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic Rule*, Princeton 1995. J.L. Bodjamra, *Christianity in Greater Syria, Byzantion* 77, 1997, 148–178.

134 D. Sourdel, *La fondation umayyade de Ramla*, in H.R. Römer & A. Noth (eds.), *Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des vorderen Orients: Festschrift b. D. Spuler*, Leiden 1981, 385–397.

135 See MacAdam, *Settlements*, cit. (n. 68), 49–93; palaces in southern Hauran: Dayr al-Kahf, Qasr Burqu', al Azraq, al-Hallabat (ibid., 65–68); in central Jordan: Qastal, al Mshatta, al Muwaqqar, al-Mushash, al Kharana (ibid., 86–91). See also Northedge, *Studies on Roman and Byzantine Amman*, cit. (n. 80), 169, table giving names of palaces and indicating the geological environment of each, ibid. fig. 13 maps palaces. A palace near Jericho: R.W. Hamilton, *Khirbat al Mafjar*, Oxford 1959. Aerial exploration: D.L. Kennedy, *La Jordanie antique vue du ciel, Archéologia* 346, June 1998, 65–65, photographs, 61–63.

Abbasid revolution. At any rate of the desert castles qasr al-Mshatta, qasr al-Mushash and qasr al-Khanara appear to have been abandoned, or at least gone into decline around 750.¹³⁶

As the majority of the Umayyad army in Syria and Palestine was accommodated in or near existing cities and villages, the new settlements in this region were generally small. A few have been found.¹³⁷ In area they range from two to eleven hectares. That on the citadel of Amman covered 9.3 hectares, of which the palace occupied 16.7%. Anjar extended over 11.47 hectares with the palace filling 3.5% of the site.¹³⁸ It was probably left to the leader of a particular military detachment to lay out the settlement, to build a mosque, and to construct a palace for himself. This regularly occupied a disproportionately large part of the built up area. The followers then built their own houses. The extent of the complex would depend on the size of the leader's retinue. All the buildings were laid out on a geometrical street plan. Ayla, the original Aqaba, was a walled rectangle 165 m by 140 m, divided into four equal quarters by streets running at rectangles from the four city gates. The meeting point in the centre of the town was marked by a *tetrapylon*. There is an obvious resemblance to a Roman legionary camp, and indeed to a geometrically planned classical city.¹³⁹

The outline of the settlement at Al-Fustat, the camp capital of Islamic Egypt, and core of modern Cairo, is less clear. It seems that the soldiers of Amr's army were settled around a small fortified centre which was the Roman fortress, generally known as Babylon. Members of each of the different tribes were allotted land in two specific areas. In time the settlement reached an urban density. The houses were plain and densely crowded, but nevertheless two storeys high, and built of baked brick with lime mortar. Each had its own sanitary unit.¹⁴⁰ In Iraq settlements were on a vastly bigger scale, but they were composed of a number of much smaller units, each of whose lay-out resembled that of the Syrian sites. Some of the settlements grew by agglomeration, tribal districts being

136 MacAdam, *Settlements*, cit. (68), 86–89; G.R.D. King, *Settlement patterns in Islamic Jordan*, SAHJ 4, 1992, 369–395.

137 A. Northedge, *Archaeology and the new urban settlements in early Islamic Syria and Iraq*, in King & Cameron (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East* 1, cit. (n. 52), 231–265 & figs. 43–57. On Syria *ibid.*, 233–244.

138 Northedge, *Archaeology and new urban settlements*, cit. (n. 52), 235–244; See also his *Studies on Roman and Islamic Amman*, cit. (n. 80), 151–165.

139 D. Whitcomb, *The misr of Ayla, settlement at al-Quaba in the early Islamic period*, King & Cameron (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, vol. 2, *Land use and Settlement Patterns*, Princeton 1994, 155–170.

140 G.T. Scanlon, *Al-Fustat: the riddle of the earliest settlement*, King & Cameron (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, cit., 171–179 and figs. 28, 33–40.

added successively to a central area, with a mosque and palace and perhaps a prison and a registry at the centre. Samarra founded in 836 AD, on a site of 378 hectares, eventually covered an area of 57 sq.km. and stretched for nearly 50 km. along the Tigris. Bagdad, founded in 762–767 by the Caliph al Mansur on a circular plan, had a built-up area of around 285 hectares. Thirteen kilometers south of Samarra was the octagonal city at al-Qadisiya of circa 185 hectares. These cities might acquire irregular shapes, but they were originally laid out on a strictly geometrical street-plan. The irregular street-plan which has been considered characteristic of the 'Islamic city', and which we find in the large villages of the Late Roman Near East, and whose beginnings we can also observe in some of the Late Roman cities, was not at all characteristic of the Islamic foundations in their original state.¹⁴¹ That Arab foundations, whether large or small, always have a very prominent palace, reflects the fact that their origins were generally closely associated with a particular ruler and his followers. Unlike the classical cities they were not given collective civic institutions. In a sense they continued the Greco-Roman urban tradition, but they also have features of a great Roman villa complex with a large and elegant residence for the owner and housing for his dependents and workers.

Not all Arab settlements survived. Rapid rise and equally rapid decline were sometimes closely linked to the rise and fall of a particular dynasty, or even of the founding ruler.¹⁴² In some cases the competition of the Muslim town squeezed out a neighbouring older city. So in Mesopotamia Kufa replaced al-Hira, Basra Ubulla,¹⁴³ and Bagdad Ktesiphon. In Egypt Cairo took the place of Memphis, in Tunisia Cairouan that of Carthage. But it is obvious that Arab rule was anything but hostile to city life as such. In fact classical cities that became centres of Muslim government benefited exceedingly. Damascus had been a minor city. Under the Umayyads it was the centre of an empire. Cordoba became the site of a great mosque and the capital of Muslim Spain and a very large city.¹⁴⁴ A huge palace complex was built a few miles outside the old Roman city, but if this was ever intended to become a Muslim city, it evidently did not survive the end of the Spanish Umayyad caliphate, being destroyed in civil war in 1013.¹⁴⁵

The history of urban sites from the Roman to the Arab period sometimes turns out to have been less continuous than it appears at first sight. It has

141 Northedge, *Studies on Roman and Byzantine Amman*, cit. (n. 80), 244–265, figs. 48–57.

142 Northedge, *Studies on Roman and Byzantine Amman*, cit. (n. 80) 142), 231–265.

143 Whitcomb, *The Misr of Ayla*, cit. (n. 139), 155–170, relevant 161–163.

144 Levi-Provençal, *Histoire de l'Espagne Musulmane* III, Paris 1953, 356–395.

145 *Cuadernos de Madinat al-Zahra* 1–III, Cordoba 1987–1991.

been observed particularly in Andalusia that Roman cities fade away to the point of extinction in the early Arab period only to reemerge on a nearby site, sometimes with a new name, around an Arab settlement. This appears to have happened to the cities that were surrendered to Arab rule by the pact of Theodemir.¹⁴⁶

Even though it made little immediate impact on the archaeology, the Arab conquest did make a difference. The former Roman territories in the Near East no longer had their principal political and economic links with the lands around the Mediterranean, but with Arabia, Mesopotamia and Iran. This inevitably changed the relative importance of old centres. The coastal cities of Palestine and Phoenicia declined. Damascus became for a time the capital of an empire. Beroea/Aleppo, previously a minor city, became an important economic centre, and a regional centre of government.¹⁴⁷ The Arab conquest brought with it a significant shift in the relative political influence of peasants and nomads, to the disadvantage of the peasants—but then the distinction between the two is now seen to be very much more blurred than used to be thought. Certainly the transformation of society caused by Islamic rule was much more gradual than say the transformation of Italy in the 5th century, or that of Asia Minor in the 7th.

There remains the question of the eventual fate of the old towns and villages on the margin of the desert in Jordan and eastern Syria. It is now evident that the Arab conquest itself did not cause any dramatic break in the archaeologically traceable culture of this area. It does however seem to remain true that the area did go into some kind of decline, particularly from the Abbasid period, even if this decline was much more gradual, and for a long time less calamitous, than has been previously thought.¹⁴⁸ How is this to be explained? One important factor was certainly the transfer of the capital of the caliphate from Damascus to Mesopotamia and a consequent redirection of state expenditure. The Abbasid caliphate marked a real turning point, not only in

146 S.G. Lloret, *De la civitas a la Madīna: destrucción y formación de la ciudad en el sureste de Al-Andalus*, Actas IV Congreso de Arqueología Medieval Española 1, Alicante 1993, 13–35, esp. 22–26. M. Acién, *Poblamiento y fortificación en el Sur de al-Andalus. La fortificación de un país de Husun*, III Congreso de Arqueología Medieval Española 1, Oviedo 1989, 135–150.

147 J. Sauvaget, *Alep, essay sur le développement d'une ville syrienne des origines au milieu du XIX^e siècle*, Paris 1941.

148 H. Kennedy, *Antioch: from Byzantium to Islam*, in J. Rich (ed.), *The City in Late Antiquity*, London 1992, 180–198, esp. 196, cites Gerasa/Jerash and Philadelphia/Amman in Jordan, and Chalcis and Apamea in northern Syria, as inland cities which survived the first 150 years of Islamic rule, but declined to vanishing point in the ninth and tenth centuries.

Syria-Palestine, but also in Egypt where it signalled the decline of Alexandria.¹⁴⁹ Another factor to be considered is the fact that the conspicuous development of the lands on the fringe of the Arabian desert in Late Antiquity took place on marginal land which for most of history, until modern times, has been much less intensively exploited, and has supported a much smaller population than in Late Antiquity. What looks like prosperity to us can only have been achieved by a never-ending struggle against adverse natural conditions. It may well not have been sustainable. Soil exhaustion is an explanation of the decline that should not be rejected out of hand.¹⁵⁰ Perhaps migration to Islamic settlement, and service in the Islamic armies gave some of the peasants a chance to get themselves settled in an easier environment.

Looking at the Islamic world as a whole, the contrast between the shrinking urban structures in the western provinces of the Empire, and indeed in Byzantine Anatolia, and the revived urbanism in the lands occupied by the Arabs is very striking. Neither the West nor Byzantine Anatolia had spectacular new settlements like the Arab camp-cities, nor did they have anything to compare with the desert palaces, with their gardens and irrigated agriculture, where previously there had been nothing, or at most a Roman fort.¹⁵¹ The condition of the early Islamic Near East is extraordinarily different from that of, say, Italy in the late 6th–mid 8th centuries, where much of the population seems to have become archaeologically invisible, and money disappeared except in garrison towns.¹⁵² Clearly, the Arabs attitude to cities was much closer to that of the classical Greco-Romans than that of the northern barbarians. In fact it would seem that from very early times a city furnished the ideal setting for the establishment of a Muslim society, and that it was precisely in the rapidly growing cities or city-like settlements that you were likely to find large numbers of Muslims in the first century or so after the Arab conquest.

The Arab conquest was not followed by a hiatus in the arts of the kind that was experienced in the West in the seventh century. The Dome of the Rock, and the Damascus mosque exemplify both continuity of traditional skills, and their use in a characteristic new way. Money continued to circulate and merchants to travel from one end of the Arab world to the other. There was definite

149 Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, cit. (n. 117), 346–351.

150 However the very careful Libyan Valleys Survey has produced no evidence that loss of fertility was a cause of the abandonment of land on a significant scale.

151 But the systems for collecting rain water could have been for watering herds.

152 Part of the trouble in the West is that archaeologists are still insufficiently familiar with post classical material. In the East there is clearly much more continuity at least until around 750, but after that similar difficulties arise, and the picture is still very obscure.

progress in agriculture:¹⁵³ many new crops cotton, citrus fruits, bananas, watermelons, spinach, artichokes, egg-plants were cultivated more widely in the Near East or North Africa during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods than ever before.¹⁵⁴ Summer cropping and new rotations seem to have been introduced at this time. These advances had a parallel in the West. One might cite the widespread adoption of the use of the horse shoe and stirrup, the invention of the horse collar, and the invention of the windmill which provided basis for leap forward in late 8th century.¹⁵⁵

The role of the Arabs in the East to some extent corresponds to that of the Germanic tribes in the West. The character of the Arabs before they took over the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire is as obscure as that of the ancient Germans, in some ways more so. Scholars are only beginning to assess the pre-Islamic condition of Arabia and its inhabitants—for instance the question whether or not the inhabitants of the peninsula had a sense common Arabhood before Islam.¹⁵⁶ A survey of recent archaeological work in Arabia,¹⁵⁷ shows that conditions there were considerably more varied and complex than was once assumed. There were sedentary farmers, towns and town-based traders. But research is still at a very early stage, and we are evidently still a long way from being able to explain the Arabs' conquests, and their cultural achievements, in terms of the conditions of pre-Islamic Arabia.

A phenomenon that can be observed on many frontiers of the Roman Empire and in East and West alike is the consolidation of small frontier tribes into larger confederations. Franks and Allemans were only the largest of such groupings. The development was no doubt partly a defensive reaction to Roman imperialism. But it was also from time to time encouraged by the Roman authorities who found it convenient to make frontier arrangements with larger units. The same process was happening on the Eastern frontier. The Lakhmids operated

153 A. Watson, *Agricultural Innovation in the Early Islamic World AD 700–1100*, Cambridge 1983. Th.F. Glick, *Irrigation and Hydraulic Technology: Medieval Spain and its Legacy*, Aldershot 1996.

154 For the view that wheeled transport was to a significant extent replaced by camels and mules see R.W. Bulliet, *The Camel and the Wheel*, New York 1975, qualified by F. Graf, *Camels, roads and wheels in Late Antiquity*, in E. Dabrowa (ed.), *Donum Amicitiae*, Electrum 1, Krakow 1997, 43–49.

155 L.T. White, *Medieval Technology and Social Change*, Oxford 1962.

156 F. Millar, *The Roman Near East 31 BC–AD 337*, Cambridge Mass. 1993, 512–514.

157 G.R.D. King, *Settlement in Western and Central Arabia and the gulf in the sixth–eighth centuries AD*, in King & Cameron (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East II*, Princeton 1994, 181–212; M.B. Piotrovsky, *Late Ancient and early Medieval Yemen: settlement traditions and innovations*, *ibid.*, 213–220.

on the Persian side of the frontier, the Ghassanids on the Roman side.¹⁵⁸ But of course infinitely the most important factor in the 'ethnogenesis' of the Arabs was the Islamic religion. The new religion not only brought about the unification of the tribes inhabiting Arabia but subsequently also the assimilation of large numbers of the inhabitants of adjoining lands. The role of Islam in the 'making' of the Arabs might be compared to that of Arian Christianity in the ethnic development in the West of Goths and Vandals. Islam did indeed incorporate some features of Christianity and Judaism, but it proved to be something new and different from either, and became a vastly more powerful and more durable bond of unity than the Arianism of the Germanic peoples.

Even if it was populated to its natural limit, the Arabian peninsula, which is largely desert, can have supported only a small population. Whatever the total, it is not likely to have been adequate to provide the manpower needed by the Islamic armies for their far-flung campaigns of conquest. It would seem more probable that the succession of conquests followed by widespread settlement was made possible by the speedy assimilation, and integration into the Islamic armies, of at least some of the conquered. We know that Berbers played big part in the Islamic conquest of Spain.¹⁵⁹ The enrolment of the population of occupied territories presumably began almost immediately after the first advances.

It certainly is a question where and how the early converts were gained. In what circumstances in fact did the inhabitants of the Near East make contact with followers of the new religion? It is likely that enslaved prisoners of war frequently turned to Islam and joined the armies.¹⁶⁰ In other cases conversion is likely to have followed more peaceful encounters with members of the advancing armies. Above all the new Arab settlements seem to have attracted immigrants from the non-Muslim population on a very large scale, with conversion to Islam following soon after settlement.¹⁶¹ The Muslim settlements thus seem to have been the growing points of the new religion, and no doubt also the principal source of recruits for the ever growing manpower needs of the early Islamic armies.

158 I. Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century*, Washington 1984; Id., *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*, Washington 1989.

159 H. Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal, a Political History of al-Andalus*, London – New York 1996, 5–6, 18.

160 R.W. Bulliet, *Islam, the View from the Edge*, New York 1994, 37–43; examples: 44, 47 (Dinar, grandfather of Abu Taiba), 53 (Abu Taiba).

161 Bulliet, *Islam*, cit. (n. 160), 67–79, although the detailed evidence is from Iran.

Hope of booty and eventually of land will have encouraged conversion. The Arab system depended on regular campaigning as much as the Roman Republic had once done,¹⁶² or even more so. The Arab conquests established an imperial concentration of power, but did not create an accepted system of legitimizing power and handing it on. War for the sake of Islam and above all war against potential or actual enemies of the faithful justified the possession of power. But the soldiers who campaigned for them needed to be rewarded. The war offered legitimacy to the ruler, but also plunder and resettlement to the follower. Did this situation encourage a remilitarisation of some of long settled and demilitarised inhabitants of the Near East?¹⁶³ Is this the explanation of the almost annual raiding of Byzantine Anatolia?

The occupation of much of the Near East by the Muslim Arabs was altogether unexpected. Yet when we look at the history of this area in later Late Antiquity with hindsight we can see that the Arab conquest was the culmination of a long term trend, the emancipation of the Near East from the Greco-Roman culture and government.¹⁶⁴ Settlers with Arab names had been moving into eastern Syria and what is now Jordan for centuries.¹⁶⁵ Syriac Christianity had taken root in Syria and Mesopotamia, and Coptic Christianity in Egypt. Large territories were practically controlled by the Ghassanid Arabs who were entrusted with the defence of the frontier.¹⁶⁶ These facts are not sufficient to explain the collapse of the Empire in the Near East, but they help to explain why there never was any possibility of recovering the lost provinces.

162 W.V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome 327–70 BC*, Oxford 1979.

163 But in Spain the population remained pacific. Fighting against Christians and in civil war was performed by imported troops and mercenaries: H. Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal: a Political History of al-Andalus*, London / New York 1996, 20, 23, 25, 49.

164 See the survey in Averil Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity*, London 1993, 182–186.

165 B. Isaac, *The Limits of Empire*, Oxford 1990, 239–245. D. Graf, *The Saracens and the defence of the Arabian frontier*, BASOR 229, 1979, 1–26.

166 See books of I. Shahid cited n. 158 above.

Arab Tribesmen and Desert Frontiers in Late Antique Syria*

This chapter traces the development of the strategy employed by the Late Roman government to guard the Empire's long frontier, which ran from Palestine to Mesopotamia along the edge of the Arabian desert, and focuses on the government's increasing reliance on Arab allies settled within the frontier. The guardians of the eastern frontier faced difficulties not encountered in the West precisely because the frontier they had to police and defend was a desert frontier, and one that was annually crossed and re-crossed by transhumant nomads.¹ Barbarian federates also came to play an extremely prominent role in the West, and it will be shown that the history of Arab groups allied to the Eastern Empire has quite a lot in common with that of Germanic federates in the service of the Western Empire, and that inadequate sources have presented modern historians of the Germanic and of the Arab allies with similar difficulties.

Diocletian's Fortification of the Eastern Frontier²

Diocletian reorganized and strengthened the defences of the eastern provinces of the Empire after the crisis of the third century, which had seen Persian invasions, and the astonishing episode of the temporary conquest of much of the Near East by the client state of Palmyra. Diocletian's reforms were in accord with Roman military traditions. He greatly increased the size of the regular army. He raised many new units³ and stationed them along the edge of the empire. The boundary of the territory under direct imperial control was now marked by a road running along the edge of the desert from the Red Sea to the

* This article was previously published in *Journal of Late Antiquity* (forthcoming).

1 The North African *limes* have presented comparable difficulties.

2 A.S. Lewin, *Populi, Terre, Frontiere dell' Impero Romano: Il Vicino Oriente nella Tarde Antichità*, Catania, 2008, 9–46.

3 See A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, Oxford, 1964, 55–60. But calculation of the actual size of Diocletian's army is complicated by the fact that units were now much smaller than under the Early Empire, see below, n. 11.

Euphrates, a road that was used by traders, but was surely designed to help military operations. Much of the road had been constructed in the second century under the emperor Trajan, but the northernmost section was only completed in the reign of Diocletian, and bore his name, the *strata diocletiana*. Forts garrisoned by either a *cohors* of infantry, or an *ala* of cavalry, were positioned along the road. These forts were located not at regular intervals, but at points where the migration routes of transhumant nomads crossed the frontier, and at oases and watering points within the frontier. In this arid region, intruders, whether serious invaders, casual raiders, or peaceful nomads, could only move along routes that had access to water, and it is clear that the defensive installations were positioned to guard precisely these routes. Research on the North African *limes* has focused more closely than that on the eastern frontier on how forts were situated in relation to the routes used by raiders and nomads.⁴ However, it is clear that the eastern *Limes* was not a continuous barrier. It could, for instance, be crossed unobserved.⁵ Benjamin Isaac was clearly right to describe the fortifications along the eastern *limes* as a military road system protected by forts.⁶

The *alae* and *cohortes* were the lowest ranking units of the Roman army and their officers received their commissions from the *quaestor*,⁷ while units of higher status received them from the *primicerius notariorum*. Regiments of the higher status, the cavalry units, *equites illyricani*⁸ and *equites indigenae*,⁹ were stationed at road junctions further in the rear. The troops stationed in the frontier region thus included a very high proportion of cavalry units. They were clearly intended to patrol long stretches of frontier, and to catch up with some highly mobile antagonists. Infantry forces, consisting of two legions in

4 See P. Troussset, "Signification de la frontière, nomades et sédentaires dans la zone du *limes* d'Afrique," in W.S. Hanson and L.J.F. Keppie (eds.), *Roman Frontier Studies* XII, (= BAR (1S) 79, Oxford), 931–42.

5 Procopius, *Aed.* 3.3.9–14.

6 B. Isaac, *The Limits of Empire: The Roman Army in the East*, Oxford, 1992, 171. For another view, see S.T., *The Roman Frontier in Central Jordan: Final Report of the Limes Arabicus Project 1986–1998*, Washington, 2006.

7 As stated in *Notitia Dignitatum* XXVIII, p. 59.23, and most of the Eastern military lists: *Et quae de minore laterculo emittuntur*. On this, Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 641.

8 It is generally thought that all the units of *equites illyricani* were derived from one large cavalry created by the emperor Gallienus, which was broken up, probably by Diocletian, who dispersed these units along the frontier. For the argument see D. Hoffmann, *Das spätromische Bewegungsheer und die Notitia Dignitatum*, vol. 1, Düsseldorf, 1969, 247–57.

9 Ariel Lewin, "Kastron Mefaa, the *Equites Promoti Indigenae* and the Creation of a Late Roman Frontier," *Liber Annuus* 51 (2001): 293–304.

each of the ducates of Syria, Phoenice and Arabia, and of one legion in the ducate of Palestina, were stationed still further in the rear.¹⁰ The legions would be strong enough to repel almost any ravaging band from the desert that could be expected to reach the interior of the province. They could no doubt also be used for offensive operations, if necessary.¹¹ Diocletian clearly had a definite overall strategy for the control and defence of the Empire's eastern border.

Diocletian's linear system was modified not long after Constantine created a large regional field army commanded by a *magister militum per Orientem*. The *magister* had his headquarters at Antioch, and the units at his disposal were usually garrisoned in cities, though the *Notitia Dignitatum* does not record their peacetime stations. Before the *magister* could confront invaders he would have had to assemble his scattered units. This would inevitably take some time. Meanwhile, it would be up to the legions to do their best. It is this modified Diocletianic system that is described in the *Notitia*.

A glimpse of the system in action is provided by the accounts of the defensive response to an invasion of Palestine by the Saracen¹² queen Mavia, who¹³ was ruling a Saracen tribe allied to Rome, but in the 370s turned against the Empire. She invaded Palestine with what must have been a very considerable force. *Cohortes*, *alae*, and *equites* were evidently brushed aside, and even the dukes could not cope. To meet the emergency, the *dux Phoenices* called on the *magister militum per Orientem* for assistance. After a time the *magister* arrived with his men in the area of conflict. When the Roman troops faced the Saracens on the battlefield, the arrogant *magister* unwisely insisted on

10 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, vol. 1, 57–58, vol. 3, 376, table x; D. van Berchem, *L'armée de Dioclétien et la réforme Constantinienne*, Paris, 1952, 3–36.

11 M. Konrad, *Resafa v: Der Spätromische Limes in Syrien. Archäologische Untersuchungen an den Grenzkastellen von Sura, Tetrapyrgium, Cholle und in Resafa*, Mainz, 2001, 104–5: legionary camps could house 1,000 men, smaller camps 660–1,000. Konrad suggests a legionary strength of perhaps 500–600. See also R. Duncan Jones, "Pay and Numbers in Diocletian's Army," in his *Structure and Scale in the Roman Economy*, Cambridge, 1990, 104–17, on 117; and Oliver Schmitt, "Stärke, Struktur und Genese des comitatensischen Infanterienumerus," in *Bonner Jahrbücher* 201 (2001): 93–111, on 107 n. 159.

12 J. Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity: Their History from the Assyrians to the Umayyads*, London: Routledge, 2003, shows that in the mid-fourth century the collective "Arab" was replaced by "Saracen" in classical sources. In earlier classical sources, some of the nomads were described as Arabs, as they were in the later Arabic texts, and ever since.

13 See *PLRE* 1, 569 sv. Mavia. See also Ariel Lewin, "Amr ibn Adi, Mavia, the Phylarchs and the Late Roman Army: Peace and War in the Near East," in A.S. Lewin and P. Pellegrini (eds.), *The Late Roman Army in the Near East from Diocletian to the Arab Conquest*, Oxford, 2007, BAR int. 17, 243–262, on 246–50.

engaging the Saracens without the support of the *dux* and his *limitanei*. He was actually on the point of being defeated, when the *dux* intervened to save his superior officer and successfully cover his retreat.¹⁴ The war was ended through diplomacy, thanks to Victor, the veteran *magister militum in praesenti*. The alliance was restored. Mavia married Victor. She became a Christian, and asked for one Moses to be consecrated bishop of her people. In 378, Mavia sent effective reinforcements to defend Constantinople after the emperor Valens had been defeated and killed at the battle of Adrianople. Mavia had evidently achieved considerable power among the desert tribes. Her confederation did not last, but it was a symptom of things to come.¹⁵

The Role of the Army on the Oriental Frontier

There has been some controversy over the function of the powerful military forces stationed along the border. Since Syria, Arabia, and Palestine verge upon desert, a full-scale invasion could not be expected from that direction. The Arab invasion in the seventh century was unprecedented. Benjamin Isaac has correctly pointed out that on the many occasions when the Roman frontier came under pressure from outside there is no indication that physical structures played a significant part in defending the Empire.¹⁶ Yet as we have seen, the imperial government made considerable and expensive efforts to fortify and garrison the frontier zone. What was the purpose of these measures?

The original reason why the imperial government built roads and forts so far out in the steppe may well have been to protect caravan traffic after Palmyra came under Roman control.¹⁷ But frontier strategy must from the start have

14 Ruf. 2.6; Soz., 38; Soc. 4.36; Theod. *HE* 4.23; also Ariel Lewin, "Did the Roman Empire have a military strategy, and were the Jafnids part of it?" in D. Genequand and C. Robin (eds.), *Les Jafnides, des rois Arabes au service de Byzance*, Paris 2014, 147–84.

15 G. Fisher, *Between Empires: Arabs, Romans and Sasanians in Late Antiquity*, Oxford, 2011A, esp. 72–99, describes how the rivalry between the Sasanian and Roman empires, and their support of particular tribal leaders and warlords, encouraged the formation of larger and more powerful confederations among the Arabs. See also below, pp. 299–300 on this typescript.

16 Isaac, *Limits of Empire*, 417.

17 W. Liebeschuetz, "The Impact of the Imposition of Roman Rule on Northern Syria," in L. de Blois and E. Lo Cascio (eds.), *The Impact of the Roman Army, 200 BC–AD 476*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2007, 421–38, on 427; also David Graf, "Rome and the Saracens: Reassessing the Nomadic Menace," in T. Fahd (ed.), *L'Arabie préislamique et son environnement historique et culturelle*, Leiden: Brill, 1997, 341–400.

taken into account the fact that a frontier running through a region of steppe along the edge of the desert would have to be crossed and re-crossed by transhumant nomads in the course of their seasonal migrations. When the Romans took over Syria much of the country was controlled by local dynasts, or leaders of tribal groups. Nomadic grazing seems to have been the dominant land use over much of Syria at that time. We have very little information about the relations of the early Roman administration with these nomadic groups.¹⁸ We should, however, probably assume that the Roman state had treaty relationships with the tribal groups, as it had with the tribes on the desert frontier of its African provinces.¹⁹

The imposition of Roman rule is unlikely to have changed the fact that transhumance was an essential element in the way of life of a considerable part of Syria's population. Unfortunately, our sources tell us very little about nomadic traffic across the oriental *limes*. We know rather more about the relationship between transhumance and *limes* fortifications in North Africa,²⁰ and there is, of course, considerable evidence about the behaviour of nomads in modern times.²¹ So we can form an idea of the problems faced by Diocletian's military planners.

The eastward expansion of settlement into the steppe,²² into lands over which nomads had previously roamed freely,²³ must have resulted in a need for some military presence. It is not the case that nomads and sedentary farmers

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- 18 M. Sartre, "Les nomades et l'empire en Arabie," in *Trois études sur l'Arabie romaine et byzantine*, Brussels, 1982, 121–203; J.D. Grainger, *The Cities of Seleucid Syria*, Oxford, 1990, 183–87, map 4 on 234.
 - 19 See Yves Modéran, *Les Maures et l'Afrique romaine iv^e–vii^e siècles*, Rome, 2003, 480–509 on the status of the Moors in 4th-century Roman Africa; also John Matthews, "Mauretania in Ammianus and the *Notitia*," in BAR Suppl. Series 15, Oxford, 1976, 157–86.
 - 20 See P. Troussset (n. 4 above), "Signification d'une frontière," 931–42.
 - 21 A fuller bibliography on relations between nomads and settlers can be found in R. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs from the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam*, London/New York, 2001, 288–90.
 - 22 Isaac, *Limits of Empire*, 70 n. 67; W. Liebeschuetz, "Nomads, phylarchs and settlement in Syria and Palestine," in A.S. Lewin and P. Pellegrini (eds.), *Proceedings of the Colloquium at Matera 2005*, Pisa/Rome, 2006, 131–45; also F. Graf, *Rome and the Arabian Frontier: From the Nabataeans to the Saracens*, Aldershot, 1997; idem, "Nomads and the Arabian Frontier: The Epigraphic Perspective," in P. Freeman, J. Bennet, Z.T. Fiema, and B.H. Hoffmann (eds.), *Limes XVIII, Proceedings of the 18th International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies*, BAR Int. 1084, Oxford, 2003, 153–60.
 - 23 M. Mango, "Byzantine Settlement Expansion in North Central Syria: The case of Androna—Andarin," in A. Borrut, M. Debié, and J.-P. Sodini (eds.), *Le Proche—Orient de Justinien aux Abbassides, peuplement et dynamique spatiale*, Bibliothèque de l'Antiquité Tardive 19, Paris, 2011, 93–122.

are inevitably and invariably hostile. In fact, they are mutually dependent, and the survival of both nomads and sedentary farmers depends on their reaching an agreement on the conditions of peaceful coexistence and cooperation.²⁴ But the fact that agriculture was expanding inevitably meant that the area at the disposal of the nomads for grazing their herds was shrinking, and this was bound to produce tension and conflict.²⁵ For instance, whenever severe drought forced the nomads to penetrate deeply into agricultural land to get water, an armed force would be needed to keep the peace.²⁶

So the frontier had to be permeable. This meant that it was also open to "foreign" nomads coming in from the desert. There was pressure from would-be immigrants from the desert region.²⁷ But as the grazing within the frontier was limited and already shrinking, immigrants would necessarily enter into competition with nomads already based inside the Empire. Conflict was inevitable unless immigration was controlled at the frontier. Frontier control required customs officials,²⁸ as well as a back-up of armed force.

Last, but not least, there was the never ending threat of nomadic raiders from the desert. Noel Lenski has shown how raiding and taking captives were deeply embedded in the Saracen way of life. He has also shown that there is evidence of such raiding for the entire period of Roman rule of the Near East.²⁹ Slave raiding was a serious and continuing problem which clearly called for defensive counter measures by whatever government was in charge of the Near Eastern provinces. This provides yet another reason why there had to be a military presence along the frontier. There is no need to posit acute internal unrest and opposition to Roman rule.³⁰

24 Liebeschuetz, "Nomads, phylarchs," 131. See the controversy between E.B. Banning's "Peasants, Pastoralists and the *Pax Romana*," *BASOR* 261 (1986): 25–50; also his "De bello paceque," *BASOR* 265 (1987): 52–54; and S.T. Parker's "Peasants, Pastoralists and the *Pax Romana*, a Different View," *BASOR* 265 (1987): 35–51.

25 Ariel Lewin, "Il Negev dall' età nabatea all'epoca tardoantica," *Mediterraneo Antico* 5.1 (2002): 319–73, esp. 364–73, on the expansion of vineyards for wine export.

26 As in Marcellinus Comes (addit.) s.a. 536.11.

27 See below, nn. 31 & 32.

28 See the Zarai tariff of customs in *CIL* VIII, 4508, and E. Fentress, *Numidia and the Roman Army*, *BAR* 15, Oxford, 1979, 183–84; also J.F. Matthews, "The Tax Law of Palmyra," *JRS* 74 (1984): 157–80 on a local law of 137 AD that imposed taxes on items entering the city of Palmyra for trading purposes.

29 N. Lenski, "Captivity and Slavery among the Saracens in Late Antiquity," *Ant. Tard* 19 (2011): 237–66.

30 For explicit evidence of fortifications built precisely to defend the population against raiders, see Lenski, "Captivity and Slavery," 256–60. It is also true that the stationing of

Border control did not stop immigration. Indeed, there was settlement of evidently quite large bands of immigrants from the Arabian desert with the government's permission and cooperation, such as the settlement of followers of Amorcessus and Aspebetus, as that of Adid, who, with his followers, deserted the Persians in 503 CE,³¹ and last, but far from least, of the Ghassanid Jafnid dynasty.³² It is likely that there were many more settlements of this kind than have been recorded in our sources.³³ A letter written by Augustine in 420 explains that when such groups were admitted into Numidia, the Roman authorities placed them under the rule of a prefect, sometimes a member of the group being admitted, perhaps even its old chieftain, who would now be expected to become a Christian.³⁴ Similar conditions are likely to have been imposed in Syria and Palestine, except that the officer appointed to administer the immigrants would have the title of phylarch.³⁵ Immigrant Saracens did not receive the legal status of citizens of the Empire, but only that of allies, whose status was defined in a treaty.³⁶ Presumably, they were given officers of their own, because they did not easily fit into the regular provincial administration on account of their annual migrations. This left them with considerable independence. In addition to authorized immigration there was also a significant amount of immigration that was unauthorized. That settlement of nomadic peoples was indeed on a considerable scale is confirmed by the fact that a high proportion of the names on inscriptions from eastern frontier regions are Arab.³⁷

large military forces in its frontier provinces enabled the Roman government to exercise strict control over provincials, and thus to levy extremely high taxes.

- 31 Amorcessus: *PLRE* 11, 73; Aspebetus *qui et* Petrus: *ibid.*, 169–70; Adid: Lenski, “Captivity and Slavery,” 237–66.
- 32 See below, 301–304.
- 33 See below, n. 45.
- 34 Augustine, *Ep.* 199, Modéran, *Les Maures et l’Afrique romaine*, 464–65.
- 35 M. Sartre, “Les nomades et l’empire en Arabie,” in *Trois études sur l’Arabie romaine et byzantine*, Brussels, 1982, 121–203, on 122–28: imperial policy towards nomadic Arabs under the early Empire; 149–70 on policy in the fifth and early sixth centuries.
- 36 Their status was thus comparable to that of the two groups of Goths in the Balkans, led, respectively, by Theoderic Strabo and Theoderic the Amal; cf. P. Heather, *Goths and Romans*, 332–489, Oxford, 1991, on 273–308.
- 37 See also notes 42 and 43 below, and Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 237; H. Glaube, “Arabs in Sixth-Century Syria: Some Archaeological Observations,” *Proceedings of the First International Congress on Bilad al-Sham*, Amman 1984, 61–66; *ibid.* F.E. Peeters, “The Arabs on the Frontier of Syria before Islam,” 141–75.

Saracens as Seen by Roman Writers³⁸

The villagers of fourth-century Syria thus shared their neighbourhood with tribesmen whom they looked upon as foreigners and barbarians. Classical sources of the fourth century and onwards describe these uncomfortable neighbours as Saracens, a description which they also use to describe the inhabitants of the Arabian peninsula and certain tribes allied to the Persian Empire. The origin of the name is uncertain. It may have originally been the name of a single tribe, but in the fourth century Saracen no longer designated a specific ethnic group, but was applied to all groups who followed a nomadic way of life. The classification Saracen therefore covers a large number of distinct tribal groups, who seemed to share a common culture and way of life, even though this did not prevent them from carrying on hereditary intertribal feuds.³⁹ The historian Ammianus Marcellinus presents us with a typical Roman view of these people: "They never touch a plough or plant a tree. They are without fixed abode, always on the move. A woman marries in one place, gives birth in another, and rears her children far away. They are . . . wholly unacquainted with grain or wine."⁴⁰ Jerome tells us that adjoining the road from Beroea (Aleppo) to Edessa is a waste over which the Saracens roam. They are conspicuous with flowing hair, broad military boots, and bows and arrows. They ride horses or camels. They attack travelers and take them prisoner. The protagonist of Jerome's *Life of Malchus* himself was taken into the desert as a slave by his captors and employed as a shepherd.⁴¹ Jerome also relates⁴² that *Arabes* and *Agareni*, who are now known as *Saraceni*,⁴³ can be found near Jerusalem, in a desert full of fierce barbarians beginning just beyond Bethlehem. Symeon Stylites, the famous anchorite who spent his life on top of a pillar in the neighbourhood of Aleppo, was visited by large numbers of Saracens who came to be healed and to receive his blessing. Many converted to Christianity.⁴⁴ When

38 F. Millar, "Rome's Arab Allies in Late Antiquity: Conceptions and Representations from within the Frontiers of the Empire," in H. Börm and J. Wiesenhöfer (eds.), *Commutatio et Contentio: Studies in the Late Roman, Sasanian and Early Islamic Near East in Memory of Zeev Rubin*, Düsseldorf, 2010, 199–226.

39 Cf. J. Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity: Their History from the Assyrians to the Umayyads*, London, 2003.

40 Amm Marc., 14.4.

41 Jer., *V. Malch*, 4 (around AD 390–91).

42 Jerome, *Ep.* 129.20–3 (AD 414).

43 F. Millar, "Hagar, Ishmael, Josephus and the Origins of Islam," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 44 (1993): 23–43.

44 Theod., *HR*, 26.13–16.

the Muslims came to Syria, they found camps of Roman Arabs at Emesa and elsewhere in northern Syria.⁴⁵

The generalizations we find in our sources regarding the way of life and behaviour of the Saracens are in fact stereotyped and misleading. It was certainly not the case that all Saracens were always on the move. Transhumant nomads need a base where they can spend the dry period of summer, and where they can carry out necessary transactions with the sedentary population. They need to come to town to obtain articles that they cannot produce themselves, such as metal utensils, weapons, and clothing, and to sell their own products, such as butter, wool, hides, meat, dung, and leather.⁴⁶ They earn money by transporting goods across the desert, or by providing guards for the local community.⁴⁷ When the transhumant nomads of southern Syria set out on their annual migration they evidently left their women behind.⁴⁸ If that was so, a significant number of men surely must have stayed behind, too, to protect their women folk, and to engage in agriculture and other chores.

The sedentary base established by Saracens often seems to have been a tented camp rather than a village. The tribesmen evidently tried to maintain a nomadic life style, even when they were establishing what were, in fact, permanent settlements.⁴⁹ This is at least suggested by a relatively detailed account of how the Arab chieftain Aspebetos abandoned his alliance with the Persians and entered the service of the Roman Empire.⁵⁰ When he and his band, men,

45 Baladhuri, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, tr. P.K. Hitti, 1916, 144. I. Shahid *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, vol. 1, Washington, DC, 1995, pp. 184, 401–404. For evidence of archaeological remains of nomadic settlements in the Negev, see Lenski, “Captivity and Slavery,” 249 n. 85.

46 See Lenski, “Captivity and Slavery,” 251 nn. 98, 99.

47 Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 288–90. We hear that the Roman officers in charge of a section of the *limes* in Numidia used to make an arrangement with the nomads across the border to provide guards for the crops and to escort caravans, Augustine, *Ep.* 46.1 (AD 395–399).

48 M. Sartre, “Transhumance, économie et société de montagne en Syrie du sud,” *Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes* 41 (1997): 75–86.

49 Differing from Lenski, “Captivity and Slavery,” 250, I would maintain that these settlements were occupied all year round, and that while some of the inhabitants went on annual migrations with their flocks, others engaged in agriculture, and yet others guarded the desert frontier. Frontier guard: Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of John the Hesychast*, Ed. Schwartz (ed.), Leipzig, 1939, 211.20 = tr. by R.M. Price, *Cyril of Scythopolis: Lives of the Monks of Palestine*, Kalamazoo, 1991, 231 c. 13; Procopius, 1.19.8–10.

50 *Life of Euthymius*, 18.20–19.5 (Schwartz) = tr. Price, 1991, 14 c. 10. Aspebetos had helped Christians escape from persecution in Persia (c. AD 420), and because he was facing punishment, had sought, and received, refuge in the Roman Empire. The date of his

women, and children, had been admitted, and Aspebetos himself given the title and office of phylarch of the Saracens in Arabia,⁵¹ they proceeded to set up a camp (*parembole*).⁵² Subsequently, Aspebetus's grandson and great-grandson also received the title of phylarch, perhaps of the Saracens in Palestine. When their followers wanted to settle near the monastery of Euthymius in southern Palestine, the abbot told them where to build a church, and where to set up their tents.⁵³ The settlers prospered and set up a number of additional camps. The camps were permanent structures, for when the camp near the monastery of Euthymius was destroyed by barbarian raiders, the group replaced it with another camp, this one near the monastery of Martyrius.⁵⁴

It is likely that at least the leaders of Saracens with camps inside the Empire had some knowledge of Greek. This was certainly the case with the "bishops of the camps." Aspebetos himself converted to Christianity and after some time was ordained bishop, taking the Greek name of Petros.⁵⁵ In 431 he played a prominent role at the first Council of Ephesus as "bishop of the camps" (*parembolai*), presumably speaking and signing in Greek. At the Second Council of Ephesus in 449, Auxilaos attended as bishop of the allied (*hupospondoi*)⁵⁶ Saracens, and gave his assent and subscribed in Greek. At Chalcedon, in 451, two bishops of the *ethnos* of the Saracens, Ioannes and Eustathius, attended, and the latter seems to have both spoken and subscribed in Greek.⁵⁷

We have no information about the linguistic knowledge of secular leaders. We are, however, told that when the Saracen chieftain Amorcessus (Imru'-al-Qays) was invited to Constantinople by the emperor Leo and invested with the office of phylarch of the Saracens around Petra, he was also allowed to sit in the senate among the *patricii*.⁵⁸ This would not have been much of an honour for somebody who could not understand the language of the debates. Amorcessus therefore probably did know some Greek. The great Jafnid phylarchs of the

entry is, however, uncertain. The *magister militum* Anatolius, who according to Cyril of Scythopolis admitted Aspebetos, only held that command in AD 433–446.

51 *Life of Euthymius*, 10 19.5 (Schwartz) = 14–15 c. 10 (Price, 1991).

52 Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Euthymius*, 14 c. 10 (Price, 1991) = 19.10 (Schwartz); 67.20–68 (Schwartz) = 64 c. 46. (Price, 1991).

53 *Ibid.*, 24.15–24.25 (Schwartz) = 20 c. 15 (Price, 1991).

54 *Ibid.*, 67.20 (Schwartz) = 64 c. 46 (Price, 1991).

55 Cyril of Scythopolis, 24.11 (Schwartz) = 20 c. 15 (Price, 1991).

56 On the use of this term to describe the status of Saracen allies, see Fisher, *Between Empires*, 77 n. 20.

57 On these ethnic bishops, see F. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 2006, 106–7.

58 Malchus, Fr. 1 (Blockley).

sixth century surely must have been bilingual. As for the rank and file in the *parembolai*, we do not know how many of them, if any, understood and spoke Greek, but they must surely have been tempted to learn the language of their Roman neighbours, especially if their own Bible and Christian services were in Greek.⁵⁹ The Saracens in the camps certainly tried to maintain a distinct cultural identity,⁶⁰ but they also adopted a good deal of the culture of their neighbours, probably far more than our Greek sources would have us suppose.

Abandonment of Some Frontier Forts

We have seen that at least from the times of Diocletian and Constantine there was a considerable military presence in the frontier provinces of the Roman East. It is, however, likely that problems requiring serious military intervention were comparatively rare, and that for most of the time most of the troops had little to do. The employment of so many units of regular soldiers was an expensive way of exercising frontier control.⁶¹ So it is not altogether surprising that archaeological surveys of the Roman fortifications on the eastern frontier have shown that the elaborate system constructed by Diocletian had been abandoned, or at least considerably weakened, well before the end of the end of Roman rule.⁶² In central Jordan, a number of forts, including the legionary base at El Leijun, had been abandoned by the middle of the sixth century.⁶³ John Casey has noted the absence of dateable Justinianic issues from forts in Palestine and Arabia, but not elsewhere.⁶⁴ In southern Jordan many, but, by no

59 See F. Millar, "The Evolution of the Syrian Orthodox Church in the Pre-Islamic Period: From Greek to Syriac?" *Early Christian Studies* 21.1 (2013): 43–92.

60 The great Jafnid phylarchs patronised poets who praised them in poems in the Arabic language. So Arabic was the official language at their headquarters. These poems were transmitted orally for at least a century, but when they were written down in early Islamic times they were some of the earliest secular writings in Arabic. R. Hoyland, "Late Roman Provincia Arabia: Monks and Arab Tribes," *Semitica Classica* 2 (2009): 117–39, on 126 n. 30.

61 On this issue, see R.M. Price, "The *Limes* of Lower Egypt," in *Aspects of the Notitia Dignitatum*, BAR Suppl. Series 15, Oxford, 1976, 143–55.

62 See the survey of the fate of frontier forts in Lewin, *Populi, Terre*, 109–22, 143–53.

63 T.S. Parker, *The Roman Frontier in Central Jordan: Final Report on the Limes Arabicus Project, 1980–89*, 2 vols., Washington, DC, 2006. On the basis of Parker's findings, especially, at Leijun, see G. Fisher in "A new perspective on Rome's desert frontier," *BASOR* 336 (2004): 49–60, esp. 49–50, argues that that fortress was abandoned as early as AD 500.

64 John Casey, "Justinian, the *Limitanei*, and Arab-Byzantine Relations in the Sixth Century," *JRA* 9 (1996): 214–22.

means all, frontier forts were abandoned by the mid-sixth century.⁶⁵ Troops returned to villages and towns of the Negev in the sixth century. They were no longer segregated in forts, but seemed to have lived among the villagers.⁶⁶ The forts along northern stretch of the frontier, however, remained occupied until Heraclius's time.⁶⁷ This region was of course under heavy pressure from the Sasanids' Arab allies, and was vulnerable to invasion by the regular Sasanian army. It is interesting that in Tripolitania, too, the linear frontier forts established by Septimius Severus appear to have been abandoned, and to have been replaced by a large number of fortified farms. It is, however, difficult, or even impossible, to distinguish fortified farms built by private landlords from fortified farms built by and for settled tribesmen (*gentiles*).⁶⁸

Desert Tribes Form Federations

The problems of border control were changing. Although it is likely that in the early fourth century the bands of raiders coming from the desert tribes were fairly small, there was a tendency for small desert tribes to link up to form larger confederations. This was happening in many regions bordering on the Empire. Collaboration was a natural defensive reaction on the part of tribes across the frontier who sought strength through unity, but it was also encouraged by the imperial policy.⁶⁹ In Arabia the formation of tribal confederations received further encouragement from the fact that the tribes found themselves between two rival powers, the Sasanian and Roman empires, both of which sought alliances and paid subsidies to tribal groups in the hope of gaining their support.⁷⁰ A well-known inscription from Nemara documents the existence of what was evidently a powerful confederation as early as AD 328: "This is the

65 Z.T. Fiema, "The Military Presence in the Countryside of Petra in the 6th Century," in P. Freeman, J. Bennett, Z.T. Fiema, and B. Hoffmann (eds.), *Limes XVIII, Proceedings of the XVIII International Congress of Roman Studies*, Oxford, 2002, 131–36.

66 Ariel Lewin, "The Late Roman Army in Palestine and Arabia," in L. de Blois and E. Lo Cascio (eds.), *The Impact of the Roman Army (200 BC–476 CE)*, Leiden/Boston 2008, 463–80, esp. 476–77.

67 Michaela Konrad, *Resafa v, Der spätromische Limes in Syrien*, Resafa 5, Mainz 2001.

68 D.J. Mattingly and B. Jones, *Libyan Studies* 17 (1986): 87–96; idem, "Farmers and Frontiers: Exploiting and Defending the Countryside of Roman Tripolitania," *Libyan Studies* 20 (1989): 135–153. On *gentiles*, see *CTh* VII.15.1 (409); *Nov. Th.* 24.4.

69 See M. Todd, "The Germanic People and Germanic Society," in *Crisis of the Empire*, *CAH* XII, Cambridge, 2005, 440–60.

70 See Fisher, *Between Empires*, esp. 72–127.

monument of Imru'l-Qays b. Amr, king of all the Arabs., who ruled Ma'add; and handed over to his sons the settled communities, when he had been given authority over the latter on behalf of Persia and Rome . . . no king had matched his achievements up to the time when he died."⁷¹

The Crisis of 498–502 and the Empire's Alliance with the Hujrids

In the 490s the eastern provinces were under heavy pressure from raiding tribesmen.⁷² In 497/8 "so-called tent-dwelling Arabs" invaded the province of Euphratensis,⁷³ while further south Palestine was overrun by plundering raiders led by Gabala, the first member of the Jafnid dynasty about whom Roman sources have any information. No sooner had the *dux* Romanus dealt with this emergency than there was an invasion by a powerful band led by Orgarus son of Arethas (al-Hârith) son of Amr,⁷⁴ ruler of the Ma'add confederation.⁷⁵ This was only defeated with some difficulty, and three or four years later, that is in 501/2, Badicharimus, a brother of Orgarus, led yet another and even more destructive raid into the provinces of Arabia, Palestine, and Phoenicia.⁷⁶ The Empire's response to this crisis was to enter into treaty arrangements with the two principal raiding tribes, the Kinda and the Ghassanites.⁷⁷ Theophanes tells us that in 502/03 "Anastasius made a treaty with Arethas known as the son of Thalabane, [or perhaps "of the house of Ta'laba"], the father of Badicharimos and Ogaros, after which Arabia and Phoenice enjoyed much peace."⁷⁸ Some time later, we do not know precisely when, this Arethas was given the office

71 Edited by P. Bordreuil, et al., in C. Robin and Y. Valvert, *Arabie heureuse, Arabie déserte*, Paris, 1997. translated by A.F.L. Beeston in Fisher, *Between Empires*, 77. This inscription of 328 is an early example. It also exemplifies the instability of these confederations: Imru'l-Qays b'Amr's kingdom did not last.

72 M. Sartre, "Les nomades et l'empire en Arabie," in *Trois études sur l'Arabie romaine et byzantine*, Brussels, 1982, 121–203, esp. 155–62.

73 Theophanes A.M. 5990, on 497–98 CE "the vanquished Arabs were tribes of the phylarch Naaman," presumably Lakkhmid.

74 *PLRE* II, 139–40, sv. Arethas (al-Hârith).

75 Theophanes 5990. Fisher, *Between Empires*, 254–58, deals with Hujrids and Kinda. Fisher suggests that the Himyars installed Hujr, son of Amr, as king of Kinda to take control of the Ma'add in Northern Arabia. That event is not dated.

76 Theophanes AM 5994, on 501–2 CE.

77 For detail, see below, 301ff.

78 Theophanes AM 5995, on 502–3 CE.

of phylarch of the Saracens, probably of those with settlements in Palestine.⁷⁹ Our sources have no date for this appointment. However, events of 528 throw some light on it. We are told that in 528 Diomedes, the Roman duke of Palestine, quarreled with the phylarch Arethas.⁸⁰ Arethas was presumably the phylarch of Diomedes's province, that is of Palestine, and if so, he had surely received this imperial office in the treaty of 502/3, or soon after. Arethas fled with some followers into inner Arabia, where he was captured and killed by al-Mundhir, an inveterate enemy of the Empire, and leader of the Saracens allied to the Sasanians. Thereupon the Roman government mobilized the dukes, together with the phylarchs of the provinces of Arabia, Phoenicia, and Euphratensis, for a successful campaign against al-Mundhir.⁸¹

Although Arethas was dead, his family continued to be important. In 531 a grandson, Caisus (Qays),⁸² received an imperial post, almost certainly a phylarchate over the settled Arabs in the provinces of Palestine, while his brothers Ambrus (Amr)⁸³ and Iezidus (Yazīd)⁸⁴ took over the phylarchates of Kinda and Ma'add. It would thus appear that when Arethas received the imperial phylarchate of Palestine, he had been allowed to retain his phylarchate of the Ma'add confederacy, even though it lay outside the Empire, and so was able pass it on to his grandsons.

Ghassanids, Jafnids, and the Empire

It was probably also in the course of the emperor Anastasius's diplomatic offensive to end the crisis of 498–502 that he made peace with the Jafnids, and that the Ghassanids were given permission to install themselves within the Empire's borders. These agreements were to be far more important in the long run than that reached with Arethas, the Hujrid, but neither Theophanes nor Malalas mentions the circumstances or date of their negotiation. We only know that the Empire did reach an accommodation with Gabala, the raider. This we learn from Procopius's account of the year 531, where we read that a certain Gabala was the father of Arethas, who ruled over the Saracens in Arabia: in

79 On Arethas (al-Hârith) son of Amr, ruler of Kinda, and father of Badicharimos and Ogaros, see *PLRE* II, 139–40.

80 Joh. Mal. 18.16 (434). See *PLRE* II, 139–40 sv. Arethas (al-Hârith).

81 Joh. Mal. 18.16 (435); Theophanes 179 (AM 6021).

82 *PLRE* IIIA, 259–60, Caisus (Qays) outlines his life.

83 *PLRE* IIIA, 54, sv. Ambrus (Amr 1).

84 *PLRE* IIIA, 613, sv. Iezidus (Yazīd).

other words he was the phylarch of Arabs in the province of Arabia, on whom Justinian was about to confer a superphylarchate, with authority over the provincial phylarchs of all the Syrian provinces.⁸⁵ The emperor is unlikely to have bestowed that office on the son unless the father had made his peace with the Empire.⁸⁶ But the circumstances of this peace remain obscure.⁸⁷

Our understanding of relationship between the dynasty of Gabala and Arethas and the Ghassanid tribe has become complicated. Scholars used to assume that Gabala and his descendants simply belonged to the tribe Ghassân⁸⁸ Today, many prefer to describe the dynasts as Jafnids, after a possibly mythical founder of the dynasty.⁸⁹ However, in my opinion, a strong case can be made that Gabala and his descendants did claim an association with Ghassân.⁹⁰

Certainly that is what much later Arab sources tell us, and this is what was believed by the two Arab historians of the ninth and tenth centuries who have given us a description of the settlement of the Ghassanids within the Empire. One of these sources⁹¹ tells us that the Ghassanids were admitted into the Empire not by the Romans directly, but by the Sahlis,⁹² a Saracen tribe that was already settled in the region the Ghassanids wanted to enter:

The tribe of the Sahlih would tax those of Mudar and other tribes who settled in their territory on behalf of the Byzantines. Ghassân approached in a great multitude, heading for Syria, and then settled in it. Then Sahlih said to them: if you agree to pay the tax you can stay. If not we will fight you. Ghassân refused and the Sahlih fought them and won. Now Ghassân

85 Proc. Bell. 1.17.47. While it seems most likely that Gabala, the father of Arethas, was the same Gabala who raided Palestine around 500, this is not actually stated in the sources.

86 Proc. Bell. 1.17.47. PLRE IIIA, 111–13, sv. Arethas (al-Hârith ibn Jabalah).

87 See C. Robin, 'Les Arabes de Himyar, des "Romains" et des Perses (III^e–VI^e siècles de l'ère chrétienne)', *Sem. Class.* 1, 167–202.

88 Th Nöldeke, *Die Ghassanischen Fürsten aus dem Hause Gafna's*, Berlin 1887.

89 See for instance Greg Fisher, *Between Empires, Arabs Romans and Sasanians in Late Antiquity*, Oxford 2011. But C. Robin (n. 87 above), 193 distinguishes between the Jafnids, the ruling dynasty, and Ghassanids, the tribe over which they ruled.

90 As argued below, 315–320.

91 Ibn Habib, *Kitâb al-Muḥabbar*, 370–71, written in the ninth- to tenth-century CE, translated by Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 239–40.

92 M. Sartre, *Trois études sur l'Arabie romaine et byzantine*, Brussels, 1982, 178–88, has argued that the admission of the Sahlis took place in the fourth century, and followed the conversion of their phylarch, whom Sartre takes to have been the Zocomos of Sozomen 6.38, though Sozomen does not make the connection with the Salih. See Sartre, *Trois études*, 146–48; also I. Kavar, "The Last Days of the Salih," *Arabica* 5 (1958): 145–58.

agreed to pay the tax. Eventually some Ghassanids killed a tax collector. The two tribes fought once more. Ghassân won and destroyed their opponents. Thereupon the Roman emperor, made a treaty of mutual military support with Tha'laba ibn Amr, the Ghassanid leader.

This story gets some support from the statement in the Chronicle of pseudo Joshua Stylites that around AD 503 certain Saracens allied to the Romans were known as the Tha'labides, conceivably because they were Saracens whom a Tha'laba had led into the Empire.⁹³ The name recurs in Al-Kabi's version of the pedigree of the Jafnid dynasty.⁹⁴ So Tha'laba was one of the names used by the family which scholars now prefer to describe as Jafnids.⁹⁵

If this version of the origin of the alliance between Jafnids and Empire does bear some relation to historical fact, it must surely relate to the treaty that transformed the Jafnid dynasty from damaging raiders into long-term allies of the Roman Empire. This assumption still raises two important questions: what was the date of the agreement between Tha'laba and the emperor Anastasius? And how was Tha'laba, who led his men into the Empire, related to Gabala, the father of Arethas, the first of the Jafnid phylarchs? I don't think that there is a definitive answer to either question, although Sartre has attempted a possible reconstruction of the sequence of events.⁹⁶

Moreover, as Tha'laba was a name current among Ghassanids, an interesting consequence could follow: Arethas the Hujrid, son of Amr, whom Theophanes describes as ὁ θαλαβάνης,⁹⁷ which has been interpreted either as "the son of

93 Josh. Stylites., ed. Wright, 1982, LVII, 45 and 54; now in *The Chronicle of Pseudo Joshua Stylites*, translated with notes and introduction by Frank R. Trombley and John W. Watt, Liverpool, 2000.

94 W. Caskel, *Gamharat an- nasab: Das genealogische Werk des Hisam ibn Muhammad al-Kalbi*, Leiden: Brill: 1966, vol. 1, table 193; vol. 2, 529. Tha'laba was, however, an extremely common name.

95 See also Christian Robin, "Les Arabes de Himyar, des Romains et des Perses (III^e–VII^e siècles de l'ère chrétienne)," *Semitica et Classica* 1 (2008): 167–202, on 177 n. 72, referring to T. Nöldeke, *Die ghassânischen Fürsten aus dem Hause Gafnas*, Berlin, 1887, 6 and 62 and to W. Caskel, *Gamharat an- nasab*, vol. 1, 193 and vol. 2, 529; see also C. Robin, "Tha'laba the King: A New Mention of an Arab King from Ghassân," in D. Genequand and C. Robin (eds.), *Regards croisés de l'histoire et d'archéologie sur la dynastie Jafnide* (forthcoming); See also M. Picirillo, "The Church of Saint Sergius at Nitl: A Centre of Christian Arabs at the Gate of Madaba," *LA* 41 (2001): 267–84 and I. Shahid, 'The sixth century complex Nitl in Jordan, the Ghassanid dimension', *Liber Annus* 51 (2001), 285–292.

96 Sartre, *Trois études*, 158–61, which not everybody will find convincing.

97 Theophanes, tr. C. Mango and R. Scott, Oxford, 1997, 141, AM 5990 (217 n. 4).

Tha'laba" or as "descended from the sons of Tha'laba," could possibly also have been a Ghassanid,⁹⁸ and so a close relative of Arethas, the father of Gabala. If this was the case, an important consequence would follow. The Hujrids appear to have been rulers of Kind, and to have been used by the kings of Himyar to control the Ma'add confederacy, thus becoming de facto rulers of large areas of central Arabia.⁹⁹ Around 500 a Ghassanid family would have been the most powerful in Arabia after the rulers of Himyar. This would surely have been good enough reason for the Jafnids to emphasize their Ghassanid identity. But this is speculation.¹⁰⁰

Provincial Phylarchs and their Subordinates¹⁰¹

We have seen that the Empire appointed a phylarch to administer each group of Arabs settled within its boundaries. These phylarchs were assigned responsibility for frontier control. As pressure on the frontier increased, the imperial government created the office of phylarch of the province. The appointment of a phylarch at provincial level did not make the existing phylarchs, as leaders of the various groups of authorized nomad immigrants, redundant. The purpose of this appointment was surely to place all the phylarchs operating in the same province under a single command.

Terebon, who probably held the office of phylarch of the Saracens in Arabia in the mid-fifth century,¹⁰² had a serious conflict with a "phylarch" at Bostra.¹⁰³ An inscription from *Anasartha*, in northern Syria, most probably still to be dated to the fifth century, mentions a certain *lamprotatos, Silvanos, "aei kratérôn en erembois."*¹⁰⁴ According to *PLRE*, Silvanus may have been *dux Syriae*, but

98 So Nöldeke, *Die ghassânischen Fürsten*, 6 and table on p. 62.

99 Fisher, *Between Empires*, 85–87; Robin, "Les Arabes de Himyar," 174.

100 It is in fact more likely that Arethas the Hujrid was connected to the "sons of Tha'laba" through his grandmother, see Caskel, *Gamharat an-nasab*, vol. 1, table on p. 238.

101 The title phylarch (tribal ruler) is of course ambiguous. The phylarchs discussed here were officers of the empire, but the title could be used to describe tribal leaders of any kind anywhere. See P. Mayerson, "The use of the term 'phylarchos' in the Romano-Byzantine East," *ZPE* 88 (1991): 291–95.

102 *PLRE* II, 1058 sv. Terebon 1.

103 *Life of Euthymius* 52.20 (Schwartz): συμφύλαρχος.

104 *IGLS* II, 297, from *Anasartha*, cf. *PLRE* II, 1012 Silvanus 8; also D. Feissel, "Les martyria d'Anasartha," *TM* 14, *Mélanges Gilbert Dagron*, Paris, 2002, 201–20, with an emended text, and a commentary that I find convincing. The inscription is undated. Feissel suggests that it may be as early as first half of the 5th century.

since he was exercising power among Arabs, and had a phylarch as a son-in-law, he is likely to have been a phylarch himself. We know that the Roman rank of *lamprotatos* (*clarissimus*) was conferred on phylarchs in the reign of Justinian.¹⁰⁵ At the same time, Silvanos's Roman name and the metrical Greek of his inscription suggest that he had acquired a significant amount of Roman or rather Greek culture. Silvanus tells us that he built a martyrion in honour of his daughter, *Kasidathè*, who had been married to a *phylarchos* "in accordance with the will of the sovereigns." The fact that the imperial authorities had taken an active interest even in the marriage of a phylarch's daughter to another phylarch, illustrates the close relationship between phylarchs and the imperial administration. It also shows that there was more than one phylarch on the border of northern Syria who was allied to the Empire. The final fragmentary and rather puzzling lines tell us that his daughter (or perhaps the memory of his daughter) has comforted Silvanos, because it moved him to seek honour not in warfare, but by acts of Christian piety. This may mean that the early death of his (Christian?) daughter was what made him give up the life of a leader of raiding nomads to become a Christian ally of the Empire.¹⁰⁶

An edict found at Beer Sheva in Palestine, and most probably to be dated to the sixth century, reveals the existence of an "*archiphylos tou koinou tōn archiphylōn tou Konstantinianou Saltou*." It follows that groups of Saracens, each ruled by a tribal chieftain, were at this time still found on single imperial estates.¹⁰⁷ We know that while the superphylarch Arethas, the Jafnid, was phylarch of Arabia in 568, a second phylarch Saraelos, son of Talemios, who was not a Jafnid, was active in the same province.¹⁰⁸

105 E.g., Justinian Nov. *Edict* 4.2, line 31: *λαμπροτάτοις φυλάρχοις*.

106 While *PLRE* II, 1012, sv. Silvanus 8, on *IGLS* II, 297, suggests that Silvanus may have been *dux Syriae*, Feissel, "Les martyria d'Anasarthas," n. 102, convincingly argues that Silvanus was a phylarch. My tentative interpretation of lines 7–10 is a speculative expansion of Feissel's argument.

107 For a recent discussion of the so-called Beer Sheba edict, see Leah, di Segni, 2004, "The Beersheba Tax Edict Reconsidered in the Light of a Newly Discovered Fragment," *SCI* 23 (2004): 131–58, with the text of fragment 4 on p. 154. Cyril Scyth. *Vita John Hesych.* 211, 20 = 231 c. 13 (Price, 1991) refers to certain Arab chiefs whose double task it was to rule their tribes and to guard the Palestinian desert. Again, we note the fact that in what was only one division of the province there was more than one phylarch. Theodore, *HR* XXVI, 14–15, relates that two tribes approached Simeon Stylites, each one requesting a blessing for its own phylarch.

108 Waddington 2464, from Harrân, commemorating the foundation of a martyrion of St. John in both Greek and Arabic, cited also by F. Millar, "Rome's Arab Allies in Late Antiquity: Conceptions and Representations from within the Frontiers of the Empire," in

We have no date for the earliest appointment to the post of provincial phylarch, but by 527/8 provincial phylarchs were certainly in position along the border,¹⁰⁹ with a provincial phylarch in post in each frontier ducate of the Arabian desert frontier.¹¹⁰ Two laws of Justinian suggest that in the sixth century provincial phylarchs had a regular place in the provincial administration.¹¹¹ It had always been a basic duty of phylarchs and their men to guard the approaches from the desert, and to defend the inhabitants of frontier provinces from raids of Saracens, particularly of Saracens allied to the Persians. In the reign of Justinian they were also regularly employed in major military operations. In 528 Justinian ordered the dukes of Phoenicia, Arabia, and Mesopotamia, together with the phylarchs of these provinces, to attack al-Mundhir, the phylarch of the Saracens allied to the Persians.¹¹² In 529 the phylarch of Palestine helped the duke of Palestine suppress a revolt of the Samaritans.¹¹³

As we have already seen, phylarchs and their Saracen forces were being given an increasing share of the military and police responsibilities previously assigned to regulars of the frontier army. Their employment had considerable

H. Börm and J. Wiesenhöfer, *Commutatio et Contentio, Studies in the Late Roman, Sasanian and Early Islamic Near East in Memory of Zeev Rubin*, Düsseldorf 2010, 199–226, on 219.

109 Aspebetus is stated to have been phylarch of Saracens in Arabia (c. 420–430 CE); see above, n. 50. The phylarch Terebon 1 (c. 458) is thought to have been phylarch of the Arabs in Palestine, though this is not stated explicitly. Somebody else seems to have been phylarch of the province of Arabia (*Life of Euthymius* 52.19 (Schwartz) = 49 c. 34 (Price, 1991). By 527/528 Palestine, Phoenice, Arabia, and Mesopotamia each appear to have had a provincial phylarch (Malalas 18, 15 [434–35]).

110 See Sartre, *Trois études*, 163–77.

111 In Just. Nov. 103.3.1 (536 AD) the *dux Palaestinae* is in command of *stratiotai*, *limitanei*, and of *foederati* (Saracens), but in Nov.102.1 the commands of *dux Arabiae* and of the phylarch seem to be independent of one another. The spheres of the duke and provincial phylarch, and indeed of the provincial governor, need not have coincided. Under Justinian there were two dukes in Phoenice, but as far as we know only one provincial phylarch. Palestine was divided into three provinces, but we hear of only one duke (of Palestine 1), and of one provincial phylarch: see Geoffrey Greatrex, “Roman Frontiers and Foreign Policy in the East,” in R. Alston and S. Lieu (eds.), *Aspects of the Roman East: Papers in Honour of Professor Fergus Millar FBA*, Turnhout, 2007, 103–73; and “Dukes of the Eastern Frontier,” in John Drinkwater and Benet Salway (eds.), *Wolf Liebeschuetz Reflected*, Bull. Inst. Class. Stud. Suppl. 91, London, 2007, 94, fig. 9.3.

112 Malalas 18, 16 (435).

113 Malalas 18, 35 (446–47).

advantages. Saracens were available in considerable numbers.¹¹⁴ They were warlike. They had been recruited into specialist units of the Roman army in the past.¹¹⁵ Tribesmen (*gentiles*), sometimes under Roman, sometimes under native leadership, had long been employed to control the desert frontiers of African provinces in Tripolitania,¹¹⁶ Numidia, and Mauretania. They were particularly well-suited for the task of controlling other transhumant nomads, and deterring slave raiders (as opposed to serious invasions), because they were familiar with the language and ways of the intruders, and they were just as mobile. Larger-scale inroads could still be checked by the regular ducal units. Above all, the employment of settled barbarians was cheaper; their employment was thus less burdensome to the Roman taxpayer.

Federates and Allies Were More Economical

Barbarian federates were cheaper than Roman regulars. Around 370 an anonymous reformer, who wanted to reduce the Empire's military expenditure, advised the emperor Valens to settle veterans on the borders of the Empire:

A provision of this kind will increase the population of the provinces, by supplying veterans, enriched with imperial gifts, who will be strong enough to cultivate the land. They will live upon the frontiers, they will plough what they recently defended . . . they will be taxpayers instead of soldiers.¹¹⁷

Not many years later, the financial advantages of employing settled allies on defence duties were clearly an important factor in the fateful decision of Valens

114 Michael Macdonald, "Nomads and the Hawran in the Late Hellenistic and Roman Periods: A Reassessment of the Epigraphic Evidence," *Syria* 70 (1993): 303–413; also "Quelques réflexions sur les Saracènes: L'inscription de Rawwafa et l'armée romaine," in H. Lozachmeur (ed.), *Présence Arabe dans la croissant fertile avant l'Hégire*, Paris, 1995, 93–101.

115 Saraceni: *Notitia Or.* XXXII 27–28; XXVIII 17; Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 612 n. 8; presumably also the numerous units of *equites indigenae* under the *duces* of the eastern frontier.

116 P. Troussset, *Recherches sur le limes Tripolitain*, Paris, 1974, 142–55: "La surveillance du *limes* était assurée principalement par les éléments territoriaux, d'abord vétérans, puis supplétiifs de recrutement local et sédentaires, enfin *limitanei* et *gentiles*, chargés en échange de concession de terres d'assurer l'entretien des défenses du *limes*, et de fournir les troupes de couverture au réseau des *centennaria*."

117 Anon. *De rebus bellicis* 5.4 (E.A. Thompson). Veteran settlements of precisely this kind were established on the frontier of Tripolitania, *CTh* 7.15.1 (409).

and his advisers to allow the Goths to enter the Balkan provinces of the Empire in 376.¹¹⁸ Some sixty or so years earlier Diocletian, finding that garrisoning the southern boundary of Egypt with a large number of regular soldiers was excessively burdensome for the taxpayer, had already adopted a strategy close to that recommended by the anonymous reformer. He moved the frontier back to Elephantine Island, and persuaded the Nobadae,¹¹⁹ who inhabited the evacuated area, to settle in cities and on the land inside the new boundaries. The hope was that they would defend their new residence from intruders. He also set up a sanctuary at Philae to be shared by old and new inhabitants and to be served by priests drawn from each group. The Nobadae and the neighbouring Blemmyes received subsidies on condition that they would cease to plunder Roman land. They received their subsidies but continued to raid and plunder nevertheless, leading Procopius to conclude that the presence of soldiers was needed to make barbarians keep their word.¹²⁰ The settlement of the Nobadae and Blemmyes was a convenient ad hoc arrangement rather than part of a grand strategy. The same was probably true for most arrangements for frontier control that were entrusted to the phylarchs of nomads settled inside the frontier in Syria and North Africa. However, if the settlement of semi-autonomous barbarian groups in frontier outposts, and their deployment as auxiliary soldiers to protect the imperial frontier, did not form part of a grand strategy, it was nevertheless often felt to be an attractive strategic option.

The Saracen allies on the Arabian desert frontier received money and sometimes *annona* in kind, but they also were allowed to keep the captives they took on their military missions, and to sell them as slaves.¹²¹ This they did most notoriously in 529, when the Saracen allies under an unnamed phylarch of Palestine, perhaps Abu Karib,¹²² who had aided the *dux* Theodorus to suppress a Samaritan revolt, are said to have enslaved and sold 20,000 Samaritan boys and girls.¹²³ The exploitation of human captives as a source of remuneration—disreputable though it was—certainly saved the government money.¹²⁴

118 Amm. Marc. 31.4.4.

119 J.H.F. Dijkstra in H. Barnard and K. Duistermaat (eds.), *The History of the Peoples of the Eastern Desert*, Los Angeles, 2012, 271–81.

120 Procopius I. 19.27.

121 Lenski, “Captivity and Slavery,” 237–66, on 240–49.

122 Millar, “*Rome’s Arab Allies*,” 199–26, on 214.

123 Joh. Mal. 18.35 (435); Lenski, “Captivity and Slavery,” 240–49.

124 Fisher, “A New Perspective,” 49–60, describes the drain on the empire’s financial and military resources resulting from heavy military commitments elsewhere where the threat was much greater.

The Superphylarchate of Arethas (al-Hârith ibn Jabalah)

We have seen that in the course of the fifth century Saracen phylarchs and their men were being given an increasingly important role in the defence of the *limes*, and that, by the end of the first quarter of the sixth century, a provincial phylarch was in command of all the Saracen groups camped in each frontier province. The operations of the different provincial phylarchs were not coordinated, however. This changed in 531, when Justinian gave Arethas, the son of Gabala,¹²⁵ command over all the phylarchs of the Syrian provinces. Procopius has given us the reasoning behind this decision:

This man, holding the position of king, ruled alone over all the Saracens in Persia, and he was always able to make his inroad with the whole army wherever he wished in the Roman domain; and neither any commander of Roman troops, whom they call “*duces*” nor any leaders of the Saracens allied with the Romans, who are called “phylarchs,” was strong enough with his men to array himself against Alamoundarus (al-Mundhir); for the troops stationed in the different districts were not a match in battle for the enemy. For this reason the emperor Justinian put in command of as many tribes as possible Arethas, the son of Gabala (Jabalah), who ruled over the Saracens of Arabia, and bestowed upon him the dignity of king, a thing which among the Romans had never before been done.¹²⁶

The creation of this superphylarchate for Arethas seems to have been accompanied by the granting of a command over the phylarchs of the Palestinian provinces to his brother¹²⁷ Abu Kârîb (Abocharabus).¹²⁸

These appointments appear to have been part of a much wider reform of the organization and distribution of the forces stationed along the eastern frontier.¹²⁹ This also involved the strengthening of some frontier garrisons and

¹²⁵ Proc. Bell. 1.17.47.

¹²⁶ Proc. Bell. 1.17.45–47, tr. Dewing.

¹²⁷ Both are said to have been sons of a Gabala.

¹²⁸ PLRE III Abocharabus (Abu Kârîb). See also F. Millar, “A Syriac Codex from Near Palmyra and the ‘Ghassanid’ Abu kârîb,” *Hugoye, Journal of Syriac Studies* 16.1 (2013): 15–35, also Millar, “Rome’s Arab Allies,” 213–14. The demarcation of the two commands is uncertain—they may have overlapped.

¹²⁹ For a more detailed examination of the strategic situation that prompted the superphylarchate, see Ariel Lewin, “Did the Roman Empire have a military strategy, and were the Jafnids part of it?,” in D. Genequand and C. Robin (eds.), *Les Jafnids, des rois Arabes au service de Byzance*, Paris 2014, 147–84. On organisation of ducal armies, see Greatrex,

a more flexible use of the forces commanded by the dukes, which was started before Justinian. The first mention of the transfer of units of *comitatenses* to the command of a *dux* was recorded in the reign of Anastasius,¹³⁰ and in 527 Justinian transferred a unit of *numeri* to Palmyra, where they joined the *limitanean* unit that had long been quartered there. The city now became the headquarters of one of the two *duces* of the province of *Phoenice Libanensis*, who was transferred to Palmyra from Emesa.¹³¹ Justinian also reinforced the garrison at Resafa, at the same time adorning the city with houses, stoas, and other buildings.¹³² We also learn that at this time the employment of ducal forces was no longer limited to guarding the province in which they were stationed, for they were now also regularly called upon to take part in major expeditions against the Sasanians and their Arab allies in Mesopotamia, which they evidently were reluctant to do.¹³³ It is clear that phylarchs could not have performed the duties that they were now required to perform if the only men at their disposal were annually migrating nomads. The forces under their command must now have included a considerable number of full-time soldiers, or mercenaries.¹³⁴

This strengthening of the army along some sectors of the frontier seems to contradict Procopius's famous statement that Justinian left the *limitanei*

"Roman Frontiers and Foreign Policy in the East," 103–73, on 162–63. On the reduction of frontier armies in the later sixth century, see C. Zuckermann, "L'armée," in C. Morrisson, *L'empire romain d'orient, 320–641*, vol. 1: *Le monde byzantin*, Paris, 2004, 143–86; also O. Schmitt, "From the Late Roman to the Early Byzantine Army from Diocletian to the Arab Conquest: Two Aspects," in A.S. Lewin and P. Pellegrini, *The Late Roman Army in the Near East*, Oxford, 2007, 411–19.

130 *CJ* 12.35.18 (492).

131 Joh. Mal. 18.2 (425–26). G. Ravegnani, *Soldati di Byzanzio in Età Giustiniana*, Rome, 1988, 95. Procopius. *Aed.* 2.11.10–12 tells us that Palmyra had been almost deserted before Justinian strengthened it with defences, and provided a garrison of troops. According to Malalas, the emperor added a unit of *numeri* (of *comitatenses*?) to the *limitanei* already present in the city.

132 Proc. *Aed.* 2.9.3–9 reports that Justinian placed a garrison in Resafa.

133 Joh. Mal. 18.16 (435), on 528 CE; *ibid.* 18.60 (462–63) on 531 CE; Proc. *Bell.* 2.16.17 (on 541 CE): two ducal troops in *Phoenice Libanensis* were reluctant to campaign in Mesopotamia, claiming that it was their duty to protect their provinces from the Saracen incursions. However, after having been assured that the Saracens would be preoccupied with religious ceremonies for two months, they agreed to join the expedition until the end of the Saracens' holy period.

134 John of Ephesus *HE* 3.6.3: Alamundarus asks for gold to pay his troops.

of the Near East for some years without pay, before finally disbanding them.¹³⁵ However, Procopius may well have generalized the application of policy which was only adopted over a particular stretch of frontier. We have seen that a significant number of the forts had been abandoned on the central Arabian frontier as early as 500.¹³⁶ It is likely that the number of regular units on that section of the frontier was further reduced by Justinian, as he needed soldiers elsewhere. Apart from his campaigns in the West, he had to fight three successive and very serious Persian wars. His reign also saw the diversion of Roman interest and military resources to Armenia and Lazica.¹³⁷ This might well have involved the running down or redeployment of units stationed in sectors of the *limes* less exposed to attack by Sasanians and their Arab allies, as well as an increased reliance on the Arab federates along stretches of the frontier from which garrisons had been withdrawn.

The creation of the superphylarchate was successful. Arethas (528–569 CE),¹³⁸ and his successor al-Mundhir (570–581 CE),¹³⁹ gained the upper hand over the Arab allies of the Sasanians and their king, also named al-Mundhir (II) (505–554 CE).¹⁴⁰ They also built up a position of considerable power in the frontier region. Eventually, they became too powerful and independent for the comfort of the imperial government. In 582 the Jafnid superphylarch al-Mundhir ibn al Hârith was accused of having treacherously destroyed a bridge

135 Proc. *Anecd.* 24.12–14. The abandonment of frontier forts is discussed by G. Fisher, “A New Perspective,” *BASOR* 336 (2004), 49–60 and by Casey, “Justinian, the *Limitanei*, and Arab-Byzantine Relations,” basing his study on the coinage from some sites, concluded that problems with the payment to the *limitanei* began around 540, and that the disbanding of the units occurred at the end of the second Persian war. He argues that the application of Justinian’s policies was restricted to *Palaestina*. Documentation from Nessana in C.J. Kraemer, *Excavations at Nessana*, vol. 1: *Non-Literary Papyri*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1958, 41–51, 60–84, 111–17, show that some units, most probably *limitanei*, were certainly present in *Palaestina* at the end of the 6th century, and on the eve of the Islamic conquest. See also Z. Fiema, “The Military Presence in the countryside of Petra in the 6th century,” in *Limes XVIII*, Oxford 2002, 131–36. On the character of the ducal system in Justinian’s time see Greatrex, “Dukes of the Eastern Frontier,” 87–98, on 95–96: dukes eventually came to be associated with particular cities; presumably, their units were concentrated there, rather than being dispersed throughout the frontier provinces.

136 Abandonment of forts: nn. 62–68, above.

137 See Greatrex, “Dukes of the Eastern Frontier,” 90–91; P. Sarris, *Empires of Faith*, Oxford, 2011, 137–40.

138 *PLRE* III A, 111–13, sv. Arethas (al-Hârith ibn Jabalah).

139 *PLRE* III A, 34–37, sv. Alamundarus; note that this Arabic name is variously rendered in different English texts: as Alamoundarus or Al-Mundhir ibn al-Hârith).

140 See *PLRE* II, 40–43, Alamundarus 2.

over the Euphrates.¹⁴¹ He was arrested and exiled to Sicily. The superphylarchate was abolished in 384 and never restored. The disgrace of Al-Mundhir¹⁴² and the abolition of the superphylarchate broke up the unity of the territory over which the Jafnid dynasty had exercised power. According to the *Chronography* of Bar Hebraeus, the phylarchate broke up into fifteen groups, each led by a different chieftain, most of which joined the Persians, while some laid down their arms and settled in towns and villages.¹⁴³ Presumably, the abolition of the superphylarchate restored semi-independence to the various local phylarchs.

The abolition of the superphylarchate did not however destroy the loyalty of its followers to the Jafnid dynasty. We are told that Mundhir's sons reacted to the abolition of their family's phylarchate by raiding widely over Phoenicia and the provinces of Palestine.¹⁴⁴ In around 586/7, some years after the abolition of the superphylarchate, a phylarch whose name is given as Gophna appears and is alternatively described as "glorious" and "illustrious." To judge by his name, his rank, and the location he chose for the meeting, Gophna was almost certainly a Jafnid.¹⁴⁵ He tried to settle a dispute between Damian, the Monophysite patriarch of Egypt (578–604), and Peter of Callinicum, the Monophysite patriarch of Antioch, (578–91), in the church of St. Sergius at Gabitha, in the region where inscriptions show that the Jafnid phylarchs had been powerful.¹⁴⁶ Although he was unsuccessful,¹⁴⁷ the incident shows that the Jafnids continued to exercise power and influence even after they had been deprived of their powerful imperial office.

The Persian invasion and the subsequent Arab conquest were to make abundantly clear that the end of the superphylarchate had greatly weakened the defenses of the eastern provinces. Nevertheless, it still did not end the Jafnids' support of the Empire. In 634 a certain Gabala (according to Baladhuri [p. 56] Jabala ibn al-Aiham, successor [and son?] of al-Hârith ibn abi Shimr), commanded the Roman Arabs in Heraclius's army, which the Arabs defeated at the Battle of the Yarmouk. Following this Roman disaster, Gabala joined the victorious Arabs for a time. Two years later, however, he returned to the Roman

141 Joh. Eph. HE 3.3.40–41, 6.16–17; *Euagr. HE* 5.20, 6.2, more in *PLRE* III A, 34–35, sv. Alamundarus (al-Mundhir ibn al-Hârith).

142 Fisher, *Between Empires*, 178; Joh. Eph. HE 3.3.41, 3.51; *Evagr. HE* 6.2.

143 Michael the Syrian 2.351; John of Ephesus HE 2.56.

144 Michael the Syrian 2, 366–67.

145 *PLRE* III A, 609, sv. Gophna and sv. Jafnah (= Gophna), The two are likely to be identical.

146 See below, notes 178–81.

147 R. Hoyland, "Late Roman Provincia Arabia, Monophysite Monks and Arab Tribes: A Problem of Centre and Periphery," *Semitica et Classica* 2 (2009): 117–39, on 129.

side, and is reported to have emigrated, together with thirty thousand followers, to the Empire, and to have settled with them at Kharsana, near Melitene.¹⁴⁸ Strikingly, the emperor Nikephoros I (802–811 CE) is said to have claimed descent from the followers of Gabala.¹⁴⁹

Not all the followers of the Jafnids migrated to the Empire. Some remained in the region south of Damascus where they had exercised power earlier.¹⁵⁰ It would appear that these inhabitants of their former phylarchate, now identified themselves as Ghassanids, an identity that some of their descendants have kept until today.¹⁵¹ Moreover, the period following the Arab conquest saw the development of a literature around the deeds of the great Jafnid dynasts that invariably associates them with the Ghassanid tribe. These post-Jafnid developments strongly suggest that dynastic loyalty had consolidated into a tribal solidarity, and that inhabitants of the one-time phylarchate had adopted the Ghassanid tribal identity of their former leaders. I find this extremely difficult to explain if those leaders, the Jafnid dynasts, had not asserted their own Ghassanid identity.

This development would seem to be an example of the phenomenon of ethnogenesis, a process that has been well studied as it shaped and transformed

148 *PLRE* III Gabala = Jabala(h) ibn al Ayham. This Gabala is only mentioned in Arab sources (Tabari, 838–923 CE), *Tarikh* 3.2 (695); Ballādhuri († 892 CE), 135–36 = tr. Hitti 208–10; and Yaʿqubi († 905 CE), 2.167–68, and other authors. The various Arabic accounts are inconsistent in detail and in ideology, but the basic elements of Gabala's history, his Ghassanid ethnicity, his leadership of Arab federates of the Byzantines at the Battle of the Yarmouk, his conversion to as well as abandonment of Islam, and his leading his followers into the Byzantine Empire recur in most of the accounts, and should probably be accepted. See J. Bray, "Christian King, Muslim Apostate," in Arietta Papaconstantinou (ed.), *Writing True Stories*, Turnhout, 2010, 149–203. At the very least, it can be taken as historical fact that a Ghassanid called Gabala was a powerful magnate in Syria at the time of the Islamic conquest.

149 Michael the Syrian, 3.15; *Chr.* 813, 196; Tabari (Williams), 2.260. According to Ballādhuri, cited by Bray, "Christian King, Muslim Apostate," 186 n. 10, Gabala was joined in his flight into Byzantine territory by 500 followers who had accompanied him on a pilgrimage to Medina. According to Yaʿqubi (Bray, "Christian King, Muslim Apostate," 189 n. 18), 30,000 followed him into Byzantine territory. It may be that though only his personal following fled with him from Medina, some of the tribesmen settled in Syria later followed his example.

150 Yaʿqubi, tr. G. Witt, Cairo, 1937, 173–74.

151 I. Shahid, "Ghassân and Post-Ghassân," in *Festschrift for Bernhard Lewin*, Princeton: Darwin Press, 1989, 323–36; also idem, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, vol. II, pt. 2, Washington, 2009; Yasmine Zahran, *Ghassân Resurrected*, London, 2006, a semi novel.

the Germanic tribes of the West.¹⁵² The story of the ethnogenesis of the followers of the Jafnids is quite comparable to that of the followers of Alaric. Alaric's Goths established Gothic kingdoms first in Gaul and then in Spain, assimilating a large number of provincials on their march through Roman provinces and in their countries of settlement, who came to accept Gothic identity.¹⁵³ An Arab poet of the sixth century tells us that "Ghassân is a tribe whose strength lies in other folk, both lightly armed men and squadrons of cavalry fight on their behalf."¹⁵⁴ It would seem that many of those "other folks" who took on arms were accepted as Ghassanids.

A factor that greatly facilitated the ethnogenesis of the Ghassanids—as it had the ethnogenesis of Alaric's Goths—was the adoption of a religion distinct from that of the emperor. The Goths had clung to what its opponents called the Arian heresy. The Jafnids adopted the anti-Chalcedonian version of Christianity, and became highly effective patrons of that sect.¹⁵⁵ Anti-Chalcedonians did not from the beginning have any vision of political or cultural separation. But spasmodic persecution, and the creation of an independent Monophysite hierarchy after 541, had the effect of turning them into outsiders. Defiance of the imperial orthodoxy consolidated their sense of alienation and strengthened their sense of collective identity. That is why the Persians, and subsequently the Arab conquerors, distrusted the followers of Chalcedon, the so-called Melkites, who adhered to the religion of the emperor, but thought that they could rely on the Monophysites. That would explain why the Jafnids who remained in Syria could flourish under the early Muslim conquerors, when the oral traditions about the deeds of their ancestors were expanded upon and put into writing.¹⁵⁶

Thus, there were two factors that principally shaped the sense of common identity, or ethnogenesis, of the followers of the Jafnids, as they had shaped that of the followers of Alaric: the comradeship of campaigning under the same leadership, and the loyalty to a minority religion. Religion in the form of Islam was of course about to become an essential factor in an ethnogenesis

152 Theories of the ethnogenesis of the Germanic tribes are associated particularly with the "Vienna School" and K. Wenskus, H. Wolfram, and W. Pohl. See Walter Pohl, Clemens Gantner, et al., *Visions of Community in the Post-Roman World: The West, Byzantium and the Islamic World, 300–1100*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2012, 183–204.

153 W. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, Oxford, 1990, 75–78.

154 Hoyland, "Late Roman Provincia Arabia: Monks and Arab Tribes," 118 n. 5.

155 Hoyland, "Late Roman Provincia Arabia: Monks and Arab Tribes," 117–39.

156 Lucas van Rompey in M. Maas (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, Cambridge, 2005, 239–66; Bas ter Haar Romeny in Pohl, Gantner, et al., *Visions of Community*, 183–204.

that proved historically far more important than that of either the Ghassanids or the Goths: the Arabization and Islamisation of the Near East.

Ghassanid Identity and the Generation of Ethnicity on the Roman Frontier

The previous section has ended with the conclusion that the phylarchs of the Jafnid dynasty, the powerful allies of the eastern Roman Empire in the sixth century, identified as Ghassanids.¹⁵⁷ The point matters, because only if that was the case, can the post-Islamic evidence linking the Jafnids with the Ghassanids, and the narratives of how the Ghassanids entered the Empire, be legitimately used to reconstruct the history of the dynasty and its followers. The identification was long assumed in the older literature. Following Theodor Nöldeke's pioneering reconstruction of that tribe's history,¹⁵⁸ the dynasty of Arethas, the superphylarch, has been described as Ghassanid, and the rise of his family has been treated as part of the history of a Ghassanid tribe and kingdom. Recent writers, however, have been critical of that identification. They have pointed out that contemporary Greek and Syriac texts dealing with the Romans' Saracen allies, as well as those dealing with the Lakhmid allies of the Persians, allow us to identify only family dynasties, in each case composed of a small group of people.¹⁵⁹

The argument is that contemporary classical sources are completely silent about the evidently very considerable number of people whom the individuals of these two dynasties led. They define the dynasts not as rulers of a tribe, but as X, son of Y.¹⁶⁰ Irfan Shahid's recent development of Nöldeke's theory that the two dynasties were linked to the two antique tribal kingdoms of the Ghassanids

157 Like much secondary literature, I have used Ghassanid as an adjective describing descent as well as association with the tribe, although the ending *-id* denotes descent, while *-ite* is the adjectival form of Ghassân, i.e., 'Ghassanan'; see Robin, "Les Arabes de Himyar," 193. Jafnid describes a family, i.e., "the house of Jafna," who was a possibly mythical ancestor, but this Arab family must have had a tribal identity as well.

158 Th. Nöldeke, *Die ghassânischen Fürsten*. aus dem Hause Gafna's, Berlin 1887.

159 The basic work is Robin, "Les Arabes de Himyar," 167–202; also Fisher, "Kingdoms or Dynasties? Arabs, History and Identity before Islam," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 4 (2011): 245–67, esp. 261–67, summarised on 245; also Fisher, *Between Empires*, esp. 172–1. More cautious, and calling for further research: Millar, 'A Syriac Codex from Near Palmyra, and the "Ghassanid" Abokarib,' *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 16.1, 15–35. esp. 27–32.

160 Miller, "Rome's Arab Allies," 201; Fisher, "Kingdoms or Dynasties," 253–54; Fisher, *Between Empires*, 3–5, 95–99.

and the Lakhmids is rejected on the ground that Shahid's assessment of the post-Islamic texts is distorted by a wish to aggrandize the Arabs before Islam as worthy ancestors of the Muslims, even though they were Christians.¹⁶¹ Textual evidence that a considerable number of buildings in the area between Bostra and Damascus are ascribed to Ghassanid rulers is considered unreliable for the same reason. According to Greg Fisher, the list of Ghassanid rulers in Hamza al-Isfahani's *Ta'rikh*¹⁶² may have more to do with a desire to elevate the Jafnids of Ghassân within the context of an imagined pre-Islamic past, than to provide an actual list of buildings and the men who constructed them.¹⁶³

In my opinion these arguments take skepticism too far. The fact that the Ghassanid's connection with the Jafnid dynasty is not mentioned by any Greek author is not a decisive argument that such a connection did not exist. Quite a lot of our information about the activities of the Jafnid phylarchs comes from ecclesiastical histories or from the lives of saints, genres that focus on the actions of individuals, not on social organization. Greek authors whom we might expect to be interested in the society of "barbarians" beyond the borders

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- 161 Fisher, "Kingdoms or Dynasties," 248. Irfan Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, vol. 1 (1995), 2.1 (2002) and 2.2 (2010), focuses on the Ghassanids and makes full use of Greek, Syrian, and Arabic sources. This magnum opus should not be ignored, even though the way Shahid presents his material makes it very difficult to assess the validity of his interpretation of the sources.
- 162 Hamza Isfahâni (893–961), *Ta'rikh*, Beirut, 1961, records monuments associated with the great Ghassanid phylarchs (see Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs*, vol. 2.1: 306–45 and [critically] Fisher, *Between Empires*, 22). Isfahâni is generally thought to exaggerate. Yâqût al-Hamawî (1179–1229) also has lists of buildings and settlements supposedly associated with the Ghassanids, and he may have used the same source as Isfahâni. See Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs*, 2.1 (2002), 341–46; and Fisher, *Between Empires*, 203.
- 163 Fisher, "Kingdoms or Dynasties," 250. That may be so, but why did they magnify the Ghassanids specifically? Why should Islamic writers have magnified a comparatively insignificant tribe, which was, moreover, Christian? One explanation could be that the Arab Umayyads claimed to be in some ways the successors in Syria of the Arabic Jafnid phylarchs, as Moshe Sharon (2008, 229–39) has suggested. This is something which they might well have done at a time when it was not yet obvious that the followers of Mohammed were introducing a new religion. See S.P. Brock, "Syriac Views of Emergent Islam," in F.M. Donner (ed.), *The Expansion of the Early Islamic State*, Chicago, 2008, 315–25, on 325: "it was only with Dionysios Tel Mahre (+845) that we are really aware that Islam was a new religion"; see also W. Kaegi, "Initial Byzantine Reaction to the Arab Conquest," *Church History* 38.2 (1969): 139–49 = *Army, Society and Religion in Byzantium*, London: Variorum, 1982, n. 13; and *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquest*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, 13–29. This explanation of course assumes that the Jafnids did claim to be Ghassanids.

of the Empire, including even Procopius, a first-rate historian, seem to have taken no interest in the diversity of nomadic tribes and their political combinations and conflicts in the deserts of Arabia. Tribal identities are almost always ignored.¹⁶⁴ All these peoples are described simply as “Saracens.” When Syriac became a literary language, its authors adopted the same convention and referred to all desert nomads simply as *Tayyaye*.¹⁶⁵ So the fact that contemporary sources from the classical world do not explicitly associate the Jafnid phylarchs with Ghassân does not mean that we must follow their example.

The pre-Islamic Arabs did not produce a written literature.¹⁶⁶ Pre-Islamic Arabia has produced a lot of inscriptions, but with the exception of a few very late inscriptions these are not in Arabic,¹⁶⁷ and they do not provide the information needed to reconstruct a continuous narrative history of the tribes of Arabia. In ancient Arabia, wars and warrior leaders were commemorated in oral poetry, which was not edited in its final written form until the seventh or eighth century, at the earliest.¹⁶⁸ Prose histories were produced later still.¹⁶⁹ But it is also important to bear in mind that some of the extant poets were actually contemporaries of the Jafnid dynasts,¹⁷⁰ and that surviving prose

164 See Millar, “*Rome’s Arab Allies*,” 208, 214. But the dedicatory and honorific inscriptions of Arabian rulers almost invariably refer to a tribe, e.g., Robin, “*Les Arabes de Himyar*,” 172, 177, 191.

165 Robin, “*Les Arabes de Himyar*,” 201.

166 As in Mycenaean Greece and Crete, writing evidently had a much more limited application in the pre-Islamic Arabian world than it has had among Israelites and classical Greeks and Romans. It was used neither to record history nor to preserve poetry, but according to Tarif Khalidi, *Arab Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, Cambridge, 1994, 20: “When the evidence is carefully weighed, little doubt remains that a substantial corpus of written *Hadith* existed at least as early as the first half of the first century A.H.” In Khalidi’s opinion there was a considerable amount of material available for subsequent ideological use. See also n. 167.

167 Fisher, *Between Empires*, 144–47.

168 Fisher, *Between Empires*, 153–60.

169 Hamza Isfahâni (893–961 CE); Al-Tabari died after 961; Yaqut 1179–1229; Yaqubi died 897. On Al-Tabari and Baladhuri, see T. Khalidi, *Arab Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, Cambridge 1994, 141–55; also Hugh Kennedy (ed.), *Al-Tabari: A Medieval Muslim Historian and His Work*, Princeton: Darwin Press, 2008. For further discussions of early Islamic historiography, see R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: a Framework for Inquiry*, Princeton 1991, esp. 69–91. Also see F.M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, Princeton, 1998, esp. 104–111 on “genealogical legitimization.”

170 Al-Nabighah (535–604 CE) even spent time at the Jafnid court. His poems link at least three localities with the Ghassanid princes (Sartre, *Trois études*, 80).

historians quote earlier written sources. Certainly myth and history are difficult to distinguish. Their narratives combine different and sometimes incompatible traditions.¹⁷¹ Nevertheless, it is, in my opinion, a mistake to assume that the post-Islamic histories of Ghassân and its kings are nothing but myth, just as it would be wrong to assume that the biblical tales of the wandering Israelites are without any historical foundation, or that Homer's *Iliad* is altogether the poet's invention. Some of the Arab writers, after all, were much closer to the historical events they recorded than the individuals who produced the final version of the Bible were to the wanderings of the Israelites through the desert and their settlement in Palestine, or than Homer was to the Trojan war, or Livy to the regal period and the struggle of the orders at Rome.

The problem of how to evaluate texts claiming to narrate historical events, some of which had happened several centuries earlier, and providing information that must have been derived largely from oral tradition, is not unique to evaluation of the sources for the pre-Islamic history of the Arabs. Historians of Mycenaean Greece, of early Republican Rome, of the early history of Israel, and not least that of the Germanic tribes, the last two being, like the Arabs, tribal societies, face the same difficulty, and in the historiography of each of these peoples phases of scholarly credulity have alternated with phases of skepticism.¹⁷² But as far as the Arab histories are concerned, there is a good chance that more detailed studies of the texts, of the various traditions and their relations to each other, and to the independent evidence of Arabian epigraphy and of the Roman and Syriac sources—a continuation of the work of Nöldeke and of Olinder—could make it easier for scholars to separate ideology and myth from historical fact.

Nevertheless, if we lack sufficient reliable information to allow us to reconstruct a genuine history of the Jafnid dynasty and of its connection to the Ghassanid tribe, we do at least have contemporary evidence that a tribal group by the name of Ghassân did operate in the Arabian desert. Robin cites three epigraphic references to Ghassân. A Sabaeen text mentions that a certain king Ilisharah Yahdub II, reigning c. 250–260 CE, sent an embassy to three kings of

171 This comes out very clearly in Julia Bray's study of the many different versions of the life of Jabala ibn al-Aiham; "Christian King and Muslim Apostate," in A Papconstantinou (ed.), *Writing True Stories*, Turnhout, 2010, 175–203; also in G. Olinder, *The Kings of Kinda of the family of Akil al Murar*, Lund/Leipzig, 1927.

172 See Khalidi, *Arab Historical Thought* and Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins* (n. 169). Cf. my criticism of excessive contemporary scepticism elsewhere in "The Debate about the Ethnogenesis of the Germanic Tribes," in Hagit Amirav and Bas ter Haar Romeny (eds.), *From Rome to Constantinople: Studies in Honour of Averil Cameron*, Leuven, 2007, 341–55.

Ghassân. A late Nabataean graffito, not dated, but seemingly from the third or fourth century CE to judge by the lettering, mentioning a king of Ghassân, was found 70 km southwest of al-Ulah, which is situated east of "Palm Trees"¹⁷³ but still c. 500 km from the border of the Empire. An inscription of Wadi Abadan of 360 CE uses the name of the country of Ghassân to identify the position of some wells. These are 38 km northwest of Mecca.¹⁷⁴ The evidence is scanty, but it is sufficient to prove the existence of kings and of a territory of Ghassân. It also suggests that Ghassân was not always in the same location, which is perhaps what we should expect of the base area of a nomadic tribe. So Ghassân existed, but we do not know whether its population was at all numerous, or whether it played a significant military or political role in the affairs of the Arabian peninsula.¹⁷⁵

We have no contemporary account of the admission of the Ghassanids into the Roman Empire. We are therefore unable to check the post-Islamic narratives. But their entry into the Empire was certainly an epoch-making event in the history of the group. It is reasonable to assume that it entered tribal memory, and that the basic facts of the narrative, the dating of the entry in the reign of the emperor Anastasius, the name of the leader, and the fact that the entry involved conflict with the Salih, are much more likely than not to be historical. We would of course like to know much more: the precise date of the entry, the size and composition of the following, which accompanied the Ghassanid leader into the Empire, and the continuing relations of that group with the tribal world of Arabia.

The post-Islamic sources represent the phylarchs of the Jafnid dynasty as both powerful and active builders in the area between Bostra and Damascus. In these texts history and legend are difficult to separate, but their testimony certainly includes genuine history, which receives confirmation from contemporary epigraphic evidence. A couple of building inscriptions of 558/9 CE from Qasr al-Hayr al Gharbi, 60 km southwest of Palmyra, are dated by the *patrikios* Flavius Hârith (al-Hârith ibn Jabalah).¹⁷⁶ Another inscription calls on God to protect the *endoxototos* Abu Kharib, the brother of Hârith.¹⁷⁷ The

173 Procopius. *History of the Wars* 1.19.7–14.

174 Inscriptions cited by Robin, "Les Arabes de Himyar," pp. 178, 183, 191 n. 178.

175 The conclusion of Robin, "Les Arabes de Himyar," 191: "La tribu de Ghassan a pratiquement disparu sur le plan politique et tribal: il n'en subsiste que des groupes dispersés entre le Hijâz et le la Syrie, qui ne contrôlent aucune oasis ni aucun territoire."

176 *IGLS* 5, 2553B and D of 558/9 CE.

177 *SEG* XLIII, 1098 from Summa north of Bostra. See M. Sartre, "Deux philarches," *Museon* 106 (1993): 143–53.

grave of Al-Hârith's brother Erethas is commemorated on an inscription from Nitl near Madaba.¹⁷⁸ Other Greek inscriptions commemorate his successor. At al-Hayyat, in the northern Hauran, a hall is dated as constructed under the *paneuphemos patrikios* Alamoundaros (al-Mundhir). An undated acclamation of Alamoundaros was found at Resafa from what has been interpreted as this patrician's audience hall.¹⁷⁹ An inscription from al-Burj, east of Damascus, tells us that Alamoundaros built a martyrion for St. Julian.¹⁸⁰ Although our later Arab sources, Al-Tabari, Yaqut, and Hamza Isfahânis, may have exaggerated the scale of building activity,¹⁸¹ their ascription of at least some buildings to Ghassanids corresponds to the abundant literary evidence that the great dynasts were active and influential in this area in the sixth century. The monophysite hierarchy that, as the sources tell us, the phylarch Arethas (al-Hârith) helped to bring into existence, still exists today as the Syrian Orthodox hierarchy.¹⁸²

Conclusion

This chapter is about the control and defence of a frontier running along the edge of a desert. Its situation created problems not presented by the imperial frontiers in the West. This desert frontier was permeable to nomads and their annual transhumance. At the same time, the internal security resulting from frontier control encouraged a great deal of settlement in the steppe region inside the new frontier. The settlers included a large number of sedentarised

178 M. Piccirillo, "The Church of Saint Sergius at Nitl," *Liber Annuus* 51 (2001): 281–82; Ariel Lewin, "The Late Roman Army in Palestina and Arabia," in L. de Blois and E. Lo Cascio (eds.), *The Impact of the Roman Army*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2007, 463–80, on 475–76.

179 On Alamoundaros (al-Mundhir) see note 138, above. The hall at al-Hayyat: Le Bas Waddington 2110 of 578 CE. The acclamation from Resafa (Sergiopolis): *SEG* VII.188.

180 Le Bas Waddington 2562c, as read by P. Gatier.

181 For an attempt to identify sites ascribed to Ghassanids, see Sartre, *Trois études*, 178–88; critical: D. Genequand, "Some Thoughts on Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi, Its Dam, Its Monastery and the Ghassanids," *Levant* 38 (2006): 63–84. There is a great deal about building activity by Ghassanid princes deduced from Arabic sources in Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs*, vol. II, 1.

182 For Jafnids' patronage of Monophysites, see Millar, "Rome's Arab Allies," 212–13, nn. 6, 7, 8, 10, and 11 which relate how Arethas' asked the empress Theodora to institute Monophysite bishops in Syria, and provide evidence of his subsequent influence with the growing Monophysite church. As noted earlier (above n. 144–146), the dynasty's influence survived the abolition of the superphylarchate. See 312–313.

nomads, including whole tribal groups settled with permission of the imperial authorities. The emperor Diocletian had hoped to guard and control the border in the traditional Roman way, stationing units of the Roman army in forts at intervals along the line of the frontier. But later emperors found it cheaper and more convenient to delegate responsibility for routine frontier control to the settled nomads themselves.

Of these settled nomad groups the most important by far was the one led by the so-called Jafnid dynasty, whom modern historians until quite recently described as Ghassanids. The association of the dynasts with Ghassân is not found in either Greek, Latin, or Syriac sources. It is only found in the texts of Arab historians, writing in the ninth century or later, which is well after the events they describe, and after the Islamic conquest. That is why recent historians have questioned the Arabic accounts of the history of the group, including their association with the Arab tribe of Ghassân. Opposing this trend, it is the thesis of this chapter that the description of the Jafnids and their followers as Ghassanids is justified, in as much as this identity must have been claimed by the dynasty itself.

Contemporary evidence leaves no doubt that the Jafnid dynasts had been powerful in the sixth century in the Hauran, in the territory between Bostra and Damascus, and even further north as far as Resafa (Sergiopolis). On this point contemporary Greek and Syriac evidence is in agreement with post-Islamic Arabic evidence. Post-Islamic Arabic evidence ascribes to the Ghassanid princes activities of the same kind, in the same region, and in the same period, as those contemporary Greek and Syriac texts ascribe to the Jafnids. Why then should we not accept the information, basic to the whole post-Islamic tradition, that these powerful leaders belonged to the Ghassanid tribe?

The great Arab historian and political theorist Ibn Khaldun insisted that among desert peoples dynasties cannot rise unless they are supported by group loyalty, which in an Arab context means tribal solidarity.¹⁸³ Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406 CE) lived centuries after the events with which we are concerned and, well-read as he was, his theories are probably based on observation of the nomads not of Arabia, but of North Africa. Nevertheless, his theories probably do apply to the rise and fall of the Jafnid dynasty. We do not know how the Jafnid dynasty achieved its position of leadership, but it surely did so by

183 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, translated by Franz Rosenthal, edited and abridged by N.J. Dawood, London, 1967, 101: "Leadership over people who share in a given group feeling cannot be vested in those not of the same descent." This statement is then qualified: an outsider can acquire leadership, but only "after he has become as one of their kin, and is addressed as one having the same descent as they."

appealing to Ghassanid group feeling. The political and military power of the Jafnid dynasty disappeared in the sixth century,¹⁸⁴ but the group feeling, the sense of shared Ghassanid identity, survived. As we have seen, this is suggested by the continued relevance, and indeed development, of myths about the history of the tribe, and by the fact that families not only in Christian Anatolia, but especially in Islamic Syria and Palestine, continued to consider themselves Ghassanids, even to the present day. Peter Heather, an expert on the history of the Goths, concluded that without an active and effective Gothic sense of solidarity, there could have been no kingdom of the Goths in Spain.¹⁸⁵ I suggest that without a sense of Ghassanid solidarity, there could have been no powerful Jafnid dynasty, no Ghassanid ethnogenesis, and no growth of legends about the great Jafnid phylarchs.

184 Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*: "Prestige lasts at best for four generations in one lineage," as did the Jafnid pylarchate: Gabala, Arethas, Al-Mundhir, Naaman (only briefly), but the fame of the family has lasted much longer.

185 The conclusion of Peter Heather, *The Goths*, Oxford, 1996, 321.

Paganism and Christianity



Julian's *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods*: The Revival and Justification of Traditional Religion*

Introduction

When Julian came to Constantinople in 361 as sole emperor he was determined to restore the traditional religion to a pre-eminent position in the empire:

For it is our duty to maintain all the ritual of the temples that the law of our fathers prescribes . . . neither more nor less than that ritual; for eternal are the gods, so that we too ought to imitate their essential nature in order that thereby we may make them propitious.¹

So it is not surprising that the two theological writings of Julian were composed on the occasions of two traditional festivals which they are intended to justify. The festivals are that of Cybele (the Mother of the Gods) in March, and that of Helios—the predecessor of Christmas—on 25th December. In editions and translations of Julian's writings, the *Hymn to King Helios* precedes the *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods*, although chronologically the latter was the earlier of the two, dating from March 362.²

Being an intellectual, Julian was keen to justify his religious policy intellectually to fellow intellectuals, men like his friend Salutius,³ whom he appointed Praetorian Prefect of the East, and the famous sophist Libanius. Julian was probably unique among Roman emperors in that he took an active part in intellectual discussions. In his efforts to save and revitalize traditional religion by intellectual argument, Julian's basic reasoning is that the views about the

* This article was previously published in *Emperor and Author, the Writings of Julian the Apostate*, eds. N. Baker-Brian & S. Tougher, Llandysul: Classical Press of Wales, 2012, pp. 229–237.

- 1 Julian, *Letter to a Priest* 302b. In this chapter the letters and orations of Julian will be numbered as in the Loeb Classical Library edition of W.C. Wright. All translations are from the same edition, unless otherwise stated.
- 2 Lib. *Or.* 18.157. The *Hymn to King Helios* was written around the time of the winter solstice, inspired by the festival of Sol Invictus (cf. Julian, *Or.* 4 131d and 156b–c).
- 3 I.e. Saturninius Secundus Salutius 3, *PLRE* 1, 814–17. He is also known as Salustius or Sallustius, which can cause confusion: see also n. 48 below.

gods presented by traditional religion are compatible with Neoplatonist philosophy, that traditional religion is philosophically sound.⁴ Allegorical interpretation serves to bridge philosophy and religion. Allegorical interpretation is more prominent in the *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods* than in the *Hymn to King Helios*. This is no doubt because the myth of Attis was much more prominent in the ritual of the March festival of Cybele, than the myths concerning Helios were in the festival of Sol Invictus in December.⁵

The *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods* and the *Hymn to King Helios*, together with Julian's response to the lecture of the Cynic Heraclius, are closely linked.⁶ They arguably represent a systematic intellectual apology for the paganism that Julian was seeking to revive. Julian was doing for his paganism (though in a much more learned and intellectual way) what Constantine had done for Christianity in his *Oration to the Saints*.⁷ In the *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods* Julian argues that the myth of Attis, correctly understood, is an allegory of the Neoplatonist world picture. After validating the myth of Attis, Julian is equally concerned to show that not only the myth but also the traditional ceremonies and ritual of the festivals of the Mother of the Gods symbolize philosophical truths and so remain as valid as ever.

The Neoplatonist World Picture

The underlying philosophical idea is that thought, or mind, or spirit precedes matter (as in the opening of John's Gospel: thus, 'In the beginning was the Word'), and that thought or mind gives rise to matter, and shapes it into the myriad forms that make up the world. So the idea of the world existed before the world, and the idea of the world created the world of matter. The Platonic theory of ideas is made the basis of an explanation for the coming into being of everything that exists. So Julian asks:

4 This was very much like the strategy used two hundred years earlier by Justin Martyr to defend Christianity in the age of persecutions.

5 The December festival was essentially a festival of the solstice. It is significant that in the *Hymn to King Helios* Julian hardly, if at all, concerns himself with the myths of Mithras.

6 See also the chapter by Arnaldo Marcone in N. Baker-Brian & S. Tougher (eds.) *Emperor and Author, the Writings of Julian the Apostate*, Swansea 2012, 239–50.

7 See Drake, H.A. 1989 Policy and Belief in *Constantine's Oration to the Saints*, *Studia Patristica* 19, 43–51; translation in Edwards M. 2003, *Constantine and Christianity*, Liverpool, 1–62.

For why are there so many kinds of generated things? Whence arise masculine and feminine . . . If there are not pre-existing and pre-established concepts, and causes which existed beforehand to serve as a pattern?⁸

In this Neoplatonic world view, the problem arises of how thought or mind can first create, and then interact with matter. This, in truth, insoluble problem is supposedly solved (or in fact only postponed) by positing a hierarchy of intellectuality. This hierarchy proceeds from the original divine unity, comprising in potential everything that is about to be, and descends—via the intelligible gods, the deified ideas of Plato, and the intellectual gods, a grade of divinity introduced by Iamblichus,⁹ and the visible gods which are the sun and the stars—finally to our earth and its earthy material. As each stage becomes more distant from the original unity, so its make up becomes inferior, with earthy matter at the bottom of the hierarchy. But each stage, while inferior to the preceding one, also participates in its predecessor's particular qualities. The visible gods are the stars, and their leader is the sun, the indispensable source of all life on earth. Since everything in the visible world is already contained in the invisible world of ideas, there is a sun at each level, at the intellectual and at the intelligible all the way back to the original unity, which has the same generative relationship to the universe coming into existence as our sun has to our planet and everything on it.¹⁰

So far this account of the origin of the world cannot be called a religion. It is in fact a logical succession of operations that have to be carried out for our world to come into existence. So the philosophical equivalent to Cybele, the Mother of the Gods, is not a personality, but a creative mental process, which leads to the production of the intellectual gods, who are themselves mental processes and ideas. There is no necessity that these abstractions should demand worship or respond to worship. These abstracts are made into the basis of a religion, or rather they are used to give traditional Graeco-Roman religion a philosophical justification on the assumption that Graeco-Roman mythology is actually an allegorical account of the philosophical picture of the

8 *Or.* 5 162d–163a.

9 On Julian's telescoping of the intellectual and intelligible levels, see the chapter by Andrew Smith, 2012, Julian's Hymn to king Helios, in N. Baker-Brian & S. Tougher (eds.) *Emperor and Author, the Writings of Julian the Apostate*, Swansea 2012, 229–237.

10 The incorporeal light of the sun is the link between our world and the immaterial world or world of ideas; and its life-giving role on earth is analogous to the process by which the higher entities generate the lower in the invisible mental world.

world, and that the traditional gods are personifications of the abstract creative processes active in the philosophical cosmogony.

Julian's two so-called 'prose hymns' supplement each other. The *Hymn to King Helios* is essentially about the coming into existence of the intelligible and intellectual gods (that is about the mental world of ideas that models and predates our world, and will eventually generate it), while the *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods* is about the generation of this material world of ours and of mankind itself. In some ways, Julian's treatises can be compared with the thirteenth book of Augustine's *Confessions* with its ethical interpretations of the creation narrative of *Genesis*.¹¹ It will be seen that neither of Julian's pieces is what we would call a hymn, that is a poem (or even a piece of prose) in praise of a god. Rather each is a sermon with the message that the myths of the gods (when properly understood) convey the same view of the gods and their relationship to the world and to mankind as the teachings of the philosophers,¹² as mediated through the Chaldean Oracles.¹³

The Chaldean Oracles

The Chaldean Oracles, as interpreted by Iamblichus, provide the link between the world of philosophy and the world of religion, which makes it possible to introduce the traditional gods into the abstract world picture of the philosophers, and indeed to give them the key dynamic roles in it. These oracles, which are preserved only in fragments, seem to describe the nature of the universe, and show how the divine principle and the human soul are related to the universe as a whole. In this way they explain why man is able to communicate with the gods, and suggest how this communication can be established by ritual invocation. They purport to have been inspired by gods, and their message is in fact related to that of the theological oracles of Apollo of Didyma. Thus they have supernatural authority. What fits them so well for

11 E.g. Augustine. *Conf.* 13.15.16–17.21, though Augustine's use of allegory is 'practical', i.e. ethical, while Julian's is philosophical. But Julian too recognises that there are two uses of allegory in religion, i.e. practical concerning behaviour, and theological (*Or.* 7 216b–c).

12 See *Or.* 6 184c–185a, on the essential consensus of all the classical philosophers, who represent different routes to the same truth.

13 *Or.* 5 162c–d: 'For I hold that the theories of Aristotle himself are incomplete unless they are brought into harmony with those of Plato; or rather we must make these also agree with the oracles that have been vouchsafed to us by the gods'.

Julian's purpose is that their theology, as far as there is one, is related to that of Middle Platonism.¹⁴ Like the philosophers they are basically monotheistic. They assume a supreme primary divine being. But they also have a role for the traditional gods as derivatives and functionaries of the supreme divinity. They thus provide a link between the divine of the philosophers and the traditional gods. At the same time they insist that individual humans can communicate with the gods by using techniques, formulae and symbolic objects which the gods in their benevolence have given to humans for that very purpose. These rituals and ceremonies—which were thought capable of uniting a human soul with the divine, and of bringing men into the divine presence by animating the statues of gods—were known as theurgy. The Neoplatonist philosopher Iamblichus wrote a commentary on the Chaldean Oracles in which he elaborated on all theurgic techniques that were available. His combination of philosophy and religion immensely impressed Julian. He tells us that the *Hymn to King Helios* summarizes teachings of Iamblichus.¹⁵

Julian and the Cynic Heraclius

During his stay at Constantinople in 361–362 Julian accepted an invitation to attend a lecture of the Cynic Heraclius.¹⁶ It is clear that Heraclius' lecture was respectful neither of the gods nor of Julian. It seems that the lecturer made up an allegory in which Zeus stood for Heraclius himself, while Pan stood for Julian.¹⁷ It is not clear whether his motive was political or academic, or even whether a Cynic philosopher was simply provocatively practising *parrhēsia* for its own sake.¹⁸ But whatever the motive of Heraclius, Julian was annoyed, or at least professed to be annoyed, and his response was one that one would have expected not from an emperor, but from an academic. He replied to one lecture with another. This is his *Against Heraclius the Cynic* (*Or.* 7), which he

14 On Neoplatonic concepts in Julian's speech see the chapter by A. Smith 2012, 229–237.

15 *Or.* 4 157c.

16 Julian was accompanied by Salutius the Praetorian Prefect of the East (*PLRE* 1, 814–17, Secundus 3), Anatolius the Master of Offices (*PLRE* 1, 61, Anatolius 5), and Memorius, soon to be governor of Cilicia (*PLRE* 1, 595, *memorius* 1): *Or.* 7 223b.

17 See *Or.* 7 234c–d.

18 It seems unlikely that Heraclius would have been an opponent of Julian himself, since in 365 Heraclius encouraged the usurpation of Procopius (Eunap. *fr.* 31 = 34.3 Blockley 1983, 50–1), who was a relative of Julian, had commanded an army in Julian's Persian campaign, and was rumoured to be Julian's preferred successor.

wrote more or less immediately after hearing the lecture, that is in March 362, and just before he wrote the *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods*, whose opening question: 'Ought I to say something on this subject also?' alludes to the recent earlier work.

Heraclius had veiled his criticism in the allegory of a myth which in some way—we can only conjecture precisely how—mocked Julian's policy of pagan revival, and perhaps even the legitimacy of his rule. In his response Julian gives a careful and full account of his views about the nature and proper uses of mythology, and he ends by replying to the myth of Heraclius with a myth composed by himself, which at the same time justifies both his view of the gods, and the legitimacy of his rule. For in Julian's myth it is the gods who have entrusted Julian with the mission to put right the abuses of the reign of Constantius II, and above all to restore the traditional worship. At the same time the treatise expounds Julian's view of the place of mythology in religion, and so provides a commentary on Julian's treatment of the myth of Cybele and Attis in the *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods*. In the address to the Cynic Heraclius Julian illustrates how myths can be interpreted philosophically by allegorizing traditional myths of Heracles and of Dionysus, and by composing a new myth which would legitimize his own imperial mission. The *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods* is essentially an elaborate philosophical reinterpretation of the myth of Attis. Julian surely wrote the two treatises in close succession, so that each should supplement the other.

Julian and the Cynics

In June 362,¹⁹ Julian wrote a second, and more general diatribe against the Cynics, entitled *To the Uneducated Cynics* (*Or.* 6).²⁰ This speech focuses neither on the Cynics' satirical treatment of the gods, nor on what Julian considers their abuse of mythology, but on a particular pamphlet of satire and criticism directed at Diogenes, the founder of Cynic philosophy, which had been composed by a Cynic whose name Julian does not divulge.²¹ It seems extraordinary that a Cynic philosopher should have attacked the founder of

19 *Or.* 6.181a: close to the summer solstice. On the two speeches against the Cynics see Smith R. 1995, *Julian's Gods: Religion and Philosophy in the Thought and Actions of Julian the Apostate*, London & New York 1995, 49–90, and the chapter by Arnaldo Marcone above, n. 5.

20 The addressee is an anonymous Egyptian (*Or.* 6.192d).

21 Probably not Heraclius.

his own fellowship: this requires an explanation. Heraclius had only been the first of a group of Cynic philosophers to seek contact with Julian's court. These men were wandering preachers who travelled all over the empire.²² They not only delivered diatribes at street corners for the general public, but they had even targeted the court of the emperor Constantius II when that emperor was in Italy,²³ as they were to target that of Julian at Constantinople.²⁴ They must have enjoyed considerable prestige. They even seem to have enjoyed the privilege of using the public post.²⁵ These later Cynics appear to have been agnostics. They did not claim divine authority for their preaching.²⁶ But they mocked not only the gods, but also Diogenes the founder of their own way of life and philosophy.

At this time Diogenes figured in the controversy between Christians and pagans. The pagans, not least Julian himself, presented Diogenes' way of life as the asceticism of a true philosopher, and they compared it favourably with the perverse asceticism of Christian monks and hermits. Against this, Christian preachers claimed that it was the monks and hermits who were living the one and only truly philosophic life. That is why, a few years later, John Chrysostom describing how Babylas, the martyred bishop of Antioch, excluded a sinful emperor from his church, insisted that the language used by the bishop had been extremely moderate,²⁷ contrasting it with the supposedly gratuitous and theatrical rudeness displayed by Diogenes towards Alexander the Great.

It would be tempting to conclude that the Cynic philosopher attacked by Julian was a Christian, who was covertly propagating the Christian ascetic philosophy, just as the Cynic Maximus of Alexandria, who tried to replace Gregory of Nazianzus as bishop of Constantinople, was certainly a Christian.²⁸ This conclusion could be supported by a few sentences in Julian's pamphlet

22 Or. 7 224a–d. Others were Asclepiades, Serenianus, Chytron, and an anonymous fair-haired young man.

23 Or. 7 223d.

24 Or. 7 224d–225a.

25 Or. 7 224a: 'I hear that you wear out the mule drivers as well, and that they dread the sight of you Cynics even more than of soldiers'. Mule drivers transporting soldiers as well as philosophers are probably employees of the *cursus publicus*.

26 Or. 7 224b; cf. Or. 7 211b–d, which argues that Diogenes and early Cynics did revere the gods.

27 According to Chrysostom the martyr preserved moderation and rationality, avoided anger and preserved calm (*De S. Babyla* 36–7, 45–6).

28 Greg. Naz. *Orr.* 25 and 26. Previously Gregory had treated him as a friend, see Asmus, J.R. 1894, Gregorius von Nazianz und sein Verhältnis zum Kynismus, *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 67, 314–49. Cf. Bidez, J. 1930, *La Vie de l'empereur Julien*, Paris, 248–9.

which seem to assume that Cynics knew the Bible.²⁹ For it is indeed quite possible that Julian would attack ascetics who were Christians without mentioning their Christianity. Classicizing pagan authors, for instance Libanius and Ammianus,³⁰ did as far as possible avoid explicit references to Christianity and the use of Christian vocabulary. Moreover it was not only pagans who joined in this conspiracy of silence. Synesius of Cyrene was probably a Christian from birth, but in his capacity of philosopher and literary man he remained altogether a Hellene. So when he wrote some paragraphs which surely amount to a reasoned criticism of Egyptian monks, he left it entirely to the reader to recognize that he was in fact criticizing a Christian movement.³¹

So the conclusion that the Cynic preachers attacked by Julian were covert Christians would be plausible. Nevertheless it is unlikely to be correct. For Julian compares the Cynics unfavourably to another sect of wandering and begging ascetics, a group whom the Christians called *Apotaktistai*,³² and who were in fact a Christian sect. He says that he had invited the latter to his court,³³ while the Cynics were unwanted. So it would seem that Julian showed more favour to sectarian Christians, than to these followers of a traditional school of philosophy.

If these Cynics were not Christians, why was Julian so strongly opposed to them? Julian and the Cynics had after all much in common. He shared the Cynics' rejection of conventional etiquette and care for external appearance.³⁴ He favoured an extremely austere way of life.³⁵ His *Caesars* and *Misopogon*³⁶ are satires, displaying some of the characteristics of the Cynic diatribe. In the

29 See the use of Gen. 9.3 in *Or.* 6 192d–193a. Also Mt. 6.28 in *Or.* 6 181c.

30 See e.g. Hunt, E.D., 1985, Christianity and Christians in Ammianus Marcellinus, CQ 35, 186–200. Libanius even wrote a panegyric of the Christian emperors Constantius II and Constans (*Or.* 59) without mentioning their Christianity. As late as the sixth century the Christian historian Agathias avoided explicitly Christian language. See Cameron, Averil, 1970, *Agathias*, Oxford, 89–108, on a Christian world view obscured by a classicising literary convention.

31 Synes. *Dio* 7–8 (1123–40).

32 Cf. Basil. *Ep.* 199.47; treated as heretics, *Cod. Theod.* 16.5.7 (381), and 16.5.11 (383).

33 Cf. *Or.* 7 224c: 'You (Cynics) gave more trouble than they (the *Apotaktistai*) did at my headquarters, and were more insolent. For they were at any rate invited to come, but you we tried to drive away'. Perhaps Julian had recalled them, i.e. the *Apotaktistai*, from exile like other 'heretical' Christians.

34 *Misop.* 339a–c.

35 *Misop.* 340b.

36 See esp. Wiemer, H.U., 1995, *Libanius und Julian*, Munich, but also Fontaine, J., 1987, Prato, C. and Marcone A., *Giuliano Imperatore. Alla Madre degli dei e altri discorsi*, Milan. Gleason, M.W. 1986, Festive satire: Julian's *Misopogon* and the New Year at Antioch, JSR 76, 106–119.

Caesars he even approaches the religious irreverence of Lucian. There is no evidence that Heraclius or other Cynics were actively hostile to Julian.³⁷ It looks rather as if they had been drawn to Julian's court because the new emperor was known to be a good patron of philosophers. That Julian attacked these Cynics shows that he could not tolerate even potential supporters if they consistently mocked the traditional gods. That is not surprising because their mockery not only undermined Julian's campaign to restore the old cults, but also offended his own profound piety.³⁸ Julian may have suspected that these later Cynics secretly sympathized with the Christians,³⁹ and that there was some kind of unofficial alliance between them.⁴⁰

The attack on the uneducated Cynics reveals a second reason for his dislike of the sect: in Julian's opinion contemporary Cynics did not respect the Hellenic literary education, and the wisdom of the classical philosophers.⁴¹ He saw them as cultural nihilists—like the Christian anchorites and monks⁴²—and consequently attacked them, but in writings, as befitted an intellectual, and without using the instruments of coercion at the disposal of an emperor.

Allegorical Interpretation

A principal theme of the oration directed against the Cynic Heraclius is the proper use of mythology. Julian criticizes the way Heraclius used, or as Julian thought abused, mythology and he supplements his criticism with an explanation of the ways mythology should correctly be used. Julian explains that most people cannot receive the truth about the gods in their purest form. They can only receive it in the form of allegory, which is conveyed in myths (*Or.* 7 217c–d). Moreover it is precisely the incongruous element in myth that guides us to the truth:

I mean that the more paradoxical and prodigious the riddle is, the more it seems to warn us not to believe simply the bare words, but to study

37 Cf. n. 18 above. Would Heraclius have invited Julian to his lecture, and would Julian have come, if Heraclius had been an open opponent?

38 *Or.* 7 213a–d.

39 So already Lucian, *De mort. Peregr.* 13, 16.

40 E.g. Oenomaus (*Or.* 6 199a–b; *Or.* 7 209b, 210d, 212a). He wrote a pamphlet *Against the Oracle* which mocks Apollo of Delphi (Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 5.25).

41 Athanassiadi-Fowden, P. 1981 *Julian and Hellenism, an Intellectual Biography*, Oxford, 128–31.

42 Cf. *Letter to a Priest* 288b.

diligently the hidden truth, and not to relax our efforts until under the guidance of the gods those hidden things become plain.⁴³

The fact is that although the Greeks and Romans did not believe that their traditional myths had been directly inspired by the gods, and although they did not consider it to be a religious duty to believe in their truth, the myths provided the evidence on which all ideas about the divine world, and about the characteristics and concerns of individual gods, could be based. Anybody who was going to talk about the nature of the gods had to start from their myths.⁴⁴ So if somebody wanted to emphasize aspects of divine nature that were not conspicuous in the traditional stories, or possibly were even inconsistent with them, which was precisely what Julian was going to do, the stories would have to be reinterpreted. It follows that philosophical pagan reformers like Julian had to treat the myths of the gods, whose authority was merely that of age and tradition, in much the same way as Christian teachers treated the text of the Bible, which they considered to be literally the words of God.

But Julian's use of allegory differed from that of the Christians in an important way. For him the scope of interpretation was not circumscribed by dogma:

Under the guidance of the gods men may be inspired to search out and study the hidden meaning, though they must not ask for any hint of the truth from others, but must acquire their knowledge from what is said from the myth itself.⁴⁵

The Myth of Attis and the March Festival of Cybele

The myth Julian chose to interpret in his *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods* is the myth of Attis, which was celebrated in the March festival of Cybele, the Mother of the Gods. It is clear that many versions of this myth coexisted, and the cult

43 *Or.* 7 217c. This attitude to the traditional myths has an exact parallel in the Christian attitude to the literary meaning and humble language of the Bible, e.g. August. *Conf.* 6.4.6.

44 In Julian's hymns the gods Helios, Cybele, Attis and the others are personifications of Neoplatonic ideas or forms. But at the same time they retain some of the properties assigned to them in cult and myth. For instance, Cybele's title 'Mother of the Gods', and therefore also mother of Zeus, belongs to her ritual, not to philosophy. That she also is the wife of Zeus must be because she is also Hera, and she is a motherless maiden (*Or.* 5 166a–b) because she is also Athena.

45 *Or.* 7 219a.

had a long history.⁴⁶ Certainly the surviving narratives diverge considerably, and none of them, it would seem, corresponds exactly to the version interpreted by Julian.⁴⁷ Pausanias' version is as follows. The goddess Cybele was originally bisexual. The gods castrated her. Her male organ turns into an almond tree. Nana, daughter of the river god Sangarius, falls in love with the tree, and puts a blossom in her bosom. She finds herself with child. This is Attis. She exposes the child. The child survives, nourished by a she-goat, and grows up into a handsome young man. The goddess Cybele falls in love with the youth who in this version is something like her grandchild. But the young man has an affair with a nymph of the river Sangarius. Cybele is jealous. She drives the young man mad with the result that he castrates himself. He loses blood, leans against a pine tree, and dies. Cybele is desolate and prays to Zeus. Zeus hears her prayer to the extent that he ordains that the dead body of Attis was not to undergo decay, that it should remain capable of moving one finger, and that its hair would continue to grow.

The version of the myth interpreted by Julian was not exactly the same as this. He does not give us a complete narrative, but his myth is likely to have been very close to the version related and interpreted by Salustius, Julian's friend and close collaborator. For according to Salustius, 'the Mother of the gods caused Attis . . . to cut off his genitals and leave them with the nymph, and subsequently to return and dwell with her again'.⁴⁸ According to Julian, 'after his castration Attis is led upwards again to the Mother of the Gods'.⁴⁹ One important difference from the versions reported by Pausanias and Arnobius is that neither Julian nor Salustius describes Attis as dying. In their versions of the story Attis castrates himself, and then returns to heaven. Julian gives a role in the story to a certain 'flame-coloured lion' who does not figure in other versions.⁵⁰ In Julian's account Helios, who sees everything, observed the love of Attis and the nymph, and straight away ordered the lion to inform the Mother of the

46 For a clear summary see Turcan R. 1996, *The Cults of the Roman Empire*, Oxford, 28–74; and see now also Bowden, H. 2010, *Mystery Cults in the Ancient World*, London, 83–104.

47 Diod. Sic. 3.58.4–59.8; Paus. 7.17.10–12; Arn. *Adv. nat.* 5.5–7.

48 Salustius, *On the Gods and the Universe* 4, trans. Nock 1926, 7–9. Like Athanassiadi-Fowden 1981, 68 n. 74, and Smith 1995, 33, I identify Sallustius, the author of *On the Gods and the Universe*, (*PLRE* 1, 796, Sallustius 1), with Saturninius Secundus Salutius 3, *PLRE* 1, 814–17, Praetorian Prefect of the East 361–365. But *PLRE* 1, 797–8, suggests that the author possibly was Flavius Sallustius 5, Praetorian Prefect of Gaul 361–363. In his pamphlet Salustius took a more positive view of our world than Julian did, and he rejected Egyptian theology, which Julian did not: see Athanassiadi-Fowden 1981, 158–60.

49 *Or.* 5 168a.

50 *Or.* 5 167b–c.

Gods of her lover's unfaithfulness.⁵¹ This is puzzling. It has been suggested that the lion has Mithraic significance, and that his inclusion in the myth reflects Julian's personal devotion to Mithras.⁵² But, as Rowland Smith has argued, this is not necessarily so.⁵³ It is quite possible that the lion already had a place in the version of the myth told at the sanctuary of Cybele at Pessinus. After all there are many images representing Cybele in a chariot drawn by lions, or on a throne which lions are guarding.⁵⁴

No doubt one reason why we have different versions of the myth of Cybele and Attis, is that the diversity reflects differences in the rituals performed at different localities, and also at different stages of the evolution of the worship.⁵⁵ This—in a very simplified form—is how Attis was celebrated at Rome after the reign of Claudius.⁵⁶ A series of festivals started on 15th March, with the Cannophori processing through the streets of Rome, carrying reeds harvested from the banks of the Almo to recall the reeds on which the new-born Attis was exposed on the banks of the Sangarius. Neither Julian nor Salutius mention this ritual. But according to Salutius the ceremonies of 22nd March were preceded by a period when the worshippers abstained from 'bread and all other rich and coarse food', considered 'unsuited to the soul', a kind of Lent.⁵⁷ On 22nd March a pine tree was cut and carried in procession through the city to the temple of Cybele (Magna Mater), and displayed for adoration by the public. On the 23rd March the pine tree was mourned. On the 24th March, the day of blood, the Galli mutilated themselves (possibly commemorating the self-castration of Attis), and the pine was ceremoniously buried. The following day, the 25th March, the *Hilaria*, was a day of popular rejoicing at the resurrection (or rebirth) of Attis.

51 According to *Or.* 5 167b the lion allegorizes 'the cause that subsists prior to the hot and fiery'. Turcan 1996, 73, interprets this as 'the part of Attis concerned with the celestial fire', that is that part of his nature that looks back to his fiery origin in Helios, 'the third cause'. This Helios was not the visible sun, but its intellectual source, the intellectual god from whom Attis emanated; see *Or.* 5 161d and 168a.

52 Athanasiadi-Fowden 1981, 145 n. 89.

53 R. Smith 1995, 161.

54 *LIMC* 8.2, 511–12; 514–16.

55 On evolution of the cult, see Turcan 1996, 35–56, and Sfameni Gasparro, G. 2003, *Misteri e Teologie. Per la storia dei culti mistici e misterici nel mondo antico*, Consenza, 2003, 249–327.

56 Turcan 1996, 43–9.

57 Salutius, *On the Gods and the Universe* 4, trans. Nock 1926, 9. At Rome, the prohibited foods included pomegranates, quinces, pork, fish; and probably wine, for only milk was drunk (so Turcan 1996, 44).

Festival and Myth Interpreted Allegorically

So the festival was one of death and rebirth. It is clear that the festivals and myth originated in Asia Minor as a fertility cult, a festival celebrating the rebirth of vegetation in spring after its death in winter, and calling on the relevant divinities to favour the growing crops, and to allow them to ripen into a good harvest. But in Julian's interpretation myth and ritual are given a cosmological and soteriological meaning.

Attis is both the son and the beloved of Cybele, the Mother of the Gods. But both the birth and the love affair are moved from earth to heaven. Attis breaks off his affair with Cybele in order to descend to earth, where he makes love to a nymph in a cave. Then overcome by shame, a punishment sent by Cybele, he castrates himself. He returns to heaven and to Cybele. Julian interprets Attis' descent to the earth and his affair with the nymph as an allegory of the mingling of divine forms with earthly matter—or rather the lowest immaterial cause which subsists prior to matter⁵⁸—which stimulated it into shaping itself into the infinite variety of our world. Attis' castration marks the end of creative mingling of spirit and matter, and the return of the spirit to heaven. This process is not a once-and-for-all event, but it recurs every year with the cycle of the sun: 'forever Attis yearns passionately towards generation; and forever he cuts short his unlimited course through the cause whose limits are fixed, even the cause of the forms'.⁵⁹ So Julian is putting forward not a 'big bang' theory, but a theory of continuous creation (unlike John's gospel).

Julian has saved the myth, i.e. he has given it an 'up to date' religious significance by allegorizing it. But by saving the myth, he has also saved the festivals, in connection with which the myth had developed. So Julian explains the significance of the festivals as follows:

When king Attis stays his limitless course by his castration, the god bids us also root out the unlimited in ourselves, and to imitate the gods our leaders and hasten back to the defined and uniform, and, if it be possible, to the One itself.⁶⁰

58 The so-called 'fifth matter'.

59 *Or.* 5 171d. 'The unlimited' is the world of matter, 'the limited' is the intellectual world of ideas (forms); cf. *Or.* 5 169c–d. The process of genesis involves an infinite increase of diversity, its reversal is a return to unity.

60 *Or.* 5 169c.

Julian points out that at the centre of the March festivals was joy over the resurrection of Attis:

For what could be more blessed, what more joyful than a soul which has escaped from limitlessness and generation and inward storm, and has been translated up to the very gods? And Attis himself was such a one.⁶¹

Accordingly he interprets the food laws as intended to remind the worshippers that the resurrection of Attis should give them hope that they too have the possibility of freeing their soul from its earthy entanglements and achieving the return of their spiritual selves to their heavenly home. That is also why participants in the worship are forbidden to eat root crops, and are allowed to eat only fruit and vegetables that grow upwards, that is towards heaven. For as Julian explains:

He who longs to take flight upwards and to mount aloft . . . even to the highest peaks of heavens, would do well to abstain from all such food. He will rather pursue and follow after things that turn upwards towards the air.⁶²

The ancient, and very earthy, fertility festival has been transformed into a celebration of the hope of personal immortality,⁶³ like the Christian Easter.⁶⁴

Cybele and Helios

The fact that Julian composed an oration 'to save' Cybele does not mean that he thought that Cybele was to be worshipped rather than the other traditional gods. His theology was syncretistic. All the traditional gods represented aspects of the divine.⁶⁵ The fragmentary letter to a priest⁶⁶ shows that he wanted the traditional cult of the gods to be continued in its entirety. As we have seen

61 *Or.* 5 169d.

62 *Or.* 5 177b.

63 *Or.* 5 175b: 'The end and aim of the rite of purification is the ascent of our souls'.

64 No wonder Firmicus Maternus, the apostate pagan become Christian apologist, considered the resurrection of Attis a parody of the Easter mystery (*Err. prof. rel.* 3.27.1).

65 *Or.* 4 143d ff: Helios identified with Zeus, Apollo, Dionysus, and Asclepius. *Or.* 5 179a–b: the Mother of the Gods is brought into a close relationship with Athena, Dionysus and Hermes.

66 See Wright 1913, vol. 2, 296–339.

he wrote the hymns to Cybele and Helios for the respective festivals of these two deities. While at times it may seem as if the roles of Helios and Cybele are alternatives, this is not so. The festivals of Cybele straddle the date of the spring equinox. This means that it is determined by the annual course of the sun. So it too is in a sense a sun festival. Attis is dependent on Helios⁶⁷ as well as on Cybele, or perhaps both Attis and Cybele are in a sense different aspects (or emanations) of Helios. The December festival of Helios and the March festival of Cybele were both festivals of the Roman state religion which Julian was striving to revive.⁶⁸ But it is clear that Julian (like at one time Constantine) also felt a particular personal devotion to the sun god.⁶⁹ He had a shrine to 'the god of the day'⁷⁰ built in the palace and worshipped there every day. This piety was partly aesthetic,⁷¹ but it was also a tradition of his family.⁷²

It so happened that Julian had occasion to compose allegorical interpretations of Helios and Cybele, but he clearly could have allegorized the other gods also. For even though they retain their individuality for the purpose of worship, they are at the same time different but closely related aspects of the single process which is the Neoplatonic cosmogony. It was Julian's policy to revive the cult of all the gods, and all the festivals, even if they ultimately stood for different aspects of a divine unity.

The Influence of Christianity

Julian the Apostate wished to reform the traditional religion to enable it to compete successfully with Christianity. But his up-dated paganism shares important features with its rival. It is basically monotheistic. The influence of Christianity on Julian's project is particularly conspicuous in the fragmentary

67 *Or.* 5 171b–c: 'Attis...after...he has set in order the chaos of our world through his sympathy with the cycle of the equinox, where mighty Helios controls...his motion within due limits, then the goddess (Magna Mater) gladly leads him upwards to herself'. See also *Or.* 5 175a–b: 'Attis...descends to the lowest limits and is checked by the creative motion of the sun so soon as that god reaches the exactly limited circuit of the universe, which is called the equinox'.

68 The state cult of Helios was that of Aurelian's Sol Invictus (*Or.* 4 155b); the March festivals of the Mother of the Gods were also on the calendar of Roman public festivals.

69 *Or.* 4 130c: 'From my childhood an extraordinary longing for the rays of the god penetrated deep into my soul'.

70 *Lib. Or.* 18.126. The 'god of the day' worshipped by Julian here may have been Sol Invictus Mithras who, though favoured by soldiers, was never admitted to the Roman state religion.

71 Cf. *Cic. Nat. D.* 2.38–9, 98–104.

72 *Or.* 4 131c–d.

Letter to a Priest, and there especially in the importance given to charitable giving, and to the bishop-like role of the priest.⁷³ The gods are aspects of a single divine power, yet they also retain their own identity. Attis is a saviour figure who descends from heaven, mingles with lower matter, suffers, and rises again, setting an example how man can rise too.⁷⁴ But there is no suggestion that Attis atones for the sins of man. As for Cybele, she is the mother of Attis only in as far as she is the mother of all gods. But at the same time she is described as motherless virgin (*Or.* 5 166b, *παρθένος ἀμήτωρ*). No doubt in the first place this was to identify her with Athena, but there is also a clear parallel with the Virgin Mary. So too Julian likes to think that Heracles did not cross the sea in a golden cup as a legend has it, but that he walked across the sea—like Jesus on the lake of Tiberias.⁷⁵ As we have seen, the whole sequence of religious rites of the 22nd–25th March bears some resemblance to Easter.

Final Prayer

The final prayer to Cybele unites all the disparate elements that make up the religion of Julian, the traditional cult of the traditional gods, the philosophic gods of which they are an allegorical image, the Roman state cult of Cybele, and Julian's personal hope for salvation:

Do thou grant to all men happiness, and that highest happiness of all, the knowledge of the gods; and grant to the Roman people in general that they may cleanse themselves of the stain of impiety . . . And help them to guide their empire for many thousand years! And for myself, grant me as a fruit of my worship of thee that I may have true knowledge in the doctrines about the gods. Make me perfect in theurgy. And . . . in the affairs of state and the army, grant me virtue and good fortune, and that the close of my life may be painless and glorious, in the good hope that it is to you, the gods, that I journey!⁷⁶

73 *Letter to a Priest* 289a–293a, 305b–c.

74 *Or.* 5 179c: Attis is described as the 'Word' (λόγος), a refutation of the 'Word' of John 1.3, 'through whom all things were made and without whom nothing was made that was made'. Cf. Julian, *Ep. ad Alex.* (*Ep.* 47) 434c–d: Helios, not Jesus, is the true Word. It follows that Attis, being an emanation of Helios, can also correctly be described as the Word.

75 *Or.* 7 219d.

76 *Or.* 5 180b–c.

The View from Antioch: From Libanius via John Chrysostom to John Malalas and Beyond*

1 Pagans, Jews and Christians at Antioch in the Mid Fourth Century

That by the mid-fourth century Christians had become the most powerful and influential religious group in the city was demonstrated very clearly by the well documented failure of Julian's pagan revival.¹ The evidence allows only one conclusion: Antioch rejected the apostate emperor's restoration of paganism. This was what Julian thought when he claimed that the citizens had adopted Christ as the guardian of their city instead of Zeus.² Libanius too accuses the citizens of having abandoned the gods.³ Most of our detailed evidence concerns the ruling élite. Julian thought that the governing body had simply given up its duty of maintaining the public cults of the city. He does not say that the majority of the *curiales* were Christians, but he claims that their wives were.⁴ Analysis of individuals mentioned in the writing of Libanius shows that some of the leading families in the city, notably the families of Argyrius⁵ and Letoius,

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I must remember and thank the late Robert Markus for reading, and generally much improving, not only this, but many other of these texts. Remaining errors and infelicities are mine not his.

1 For a general survey see J. Hahn, *Gewalt und religiöser Konflikt. Studien zu den Auseinandersetzungen zwischen Christen, Heiden, und Juden im Osten des römischen Reiches von Konstantin bis Theodosius II*, Berlin 2004, 54–177.

2 *Misopogon* 357 C.

3 *Lib. Or* XVI, 47–48. Orations XV and XVI in which Libanius apologises to Julian for the behaviour of the Antiochenes, emphasises that there were some good pagans in the city, but also implies that the majority, certainly the vocal and influential majority, were now Christians, cf. I. Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity. Greeks, Jews and Christians at Antioch*, Cambridge 2007, 169–173.

4 It is true that statistics drawn from Libanius' writings suggest that Christians were even then still a minority in the *curia* (P. Petit, *Libanius et la vie municipale à Antioche*, Paris 1955, 202). But the collective behaviour of the *curiales* suggests that in Petit's sample, essentially friends of Libanius, pagans are over-represented.

5 B. Cabouret, *Les Argyrioi une famille de notables*, in *Mélanges A.F. Norman*, Lyon 2006, 343–360.

and the family of Libanius' friend Olympius, were still pagans. But the same analysis also shows that leading pagan families including Libanius' own⁶ had close relatives who were Christians. So pagans and Christians in the civic élite had strong motives to be tolerant of each other's religious differences. Libanius was a consistent and dedicated upholder of the ancestral cults,⁷ and most of his closest friends were pagans, but he corresponded with plenty of Christians, and Christian fathers sent their sons to his school.⁸ So religious differences do not appear to have led to hostility in private life.⁹ The religious conflict we hear about—though not from Libanius—is conflict among Christians, between those who accepted the creed of Nicaea and those who did not. We do not know how far this division divided lay-people at Antioch.

We have no statistics to assess the numerical strength of different religious groups at Antioch at this, or any other time. We have altogether very little information about the religious behaviour of the silent majority. But one thing is clear, the high proportion of Christians, and the considerable Jewish population, together with the fact that the administration of the empire now consistently favoured Christianity, and was biased against the traditional religion, meant that the old cults could not continue as the religious voice of the citizen-body. Antioch no longer had a pagan identity. Julian admitted that he had failed to restore a religious meaning to the public festivals of Antioch. He distinguishes the truly sacred festivals (which he had failed to revive) from the festivals which mattered not only to those who worshipped the gods, but to the entire people.¹⁰ The latter were spectacles like the animal chases, the Olympic Games, chariot races and theatricals, many of which had once had a religious significance,¹¹ but were now regarded by most people simply as

6 See J. Wintjes, *Das Leben des Libanius*, in *Historische Studien der Universität Würzburg* 2, Rahden: Westfalen 2005, 43–62.

7 There is abundant evidence that Libanius was a committed pagan, particularly in *Or.* XVIII; (*Funeral Oration for Julian*, AD 365); *Or.* XXIV (*On the avenging of Julian*, 378/9 AD); *Or.* XXX (*For the temples*, AD 386); *Or.* V (*Artemis*); also the concluding chapters the *Autobiography* (*Or.* I, 283–85), and many passages elsewhere, both in *Or.* I and in other writings.

8 See prosopographical detail in P. Petit, *Les étudiants de Libanius*, Paris 1957.

9 W. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch, City and Imperial Administration in the Later Empire*, Oxford 1972, 226–228.

10 *Misopogon* 346 A & C.

11 Animal chases had been linked to the imperial cult. The Olympic Games were instituted in honour of Zeus. Chariot-race meetings were originally linked to pagan festivals, e.g. that of Poseidon and that of Calliope, and the celebration of the New Year.

public entertainments. They had been completely secularized.¹² Clearly there still were many convinced followers of the old cults among the citizens of Antioch. But the focus of paganism had changed. It had ceased to be the public religion of the city. It had been forced out of the public sphere, and had become largely a private and personal religion. One might compare what is happening to Christianity in western Europe today, where the very concept of public religion is becoming unintelligible.¹³

The evidence therefore strongly suggests that when Julian arrived there in 362, Christianity, even if it had not yet triumphed completely, already had very much the upper hand at Antioch.¹⁴ This is not surprising. After all Christianity had a long history in the city. It was there that followers of Jesus were first called "Christians". Furthermore Antioch had for something like twenty years, between 340 and 360, been the principal residence of a committed Christian emperor and his court,¹⁵ so that men could hope for secular advancement if they converted to Christianity. Furthermore the emperor Constantius had actually prohibited sacrifices,¹⁶ and his law was widely enforced.¹⁷ In the 350s pagan altars had been attacked, and temples destroyed and their stones carried off to be re-used in private buildings.¹⁸

It is noteworthy that Constantius' prohibition of blood-sacrifices does not appear to have caused the widespread riot and protest that one would expect to follow the prohibition of the central rite of traditional paganism. Perhaps the recent prohibition of smoking provides an instructive parallel. For many years a large part of the population in Britain and elsewhere in Europe had enjoyed smoking, though the number of smokers, noticeably among students was declining. At that point the political leadership issued a prohibition of smoking in all public places. One might have expected protests at so blatant an infringement of liberty. But in fact prohibition has been quietly accepted. Why was that? Partly because the new law was imposed by the overwhelming power of the government, but also because public opinion was already turning against smoking, because the facts of its unhealthiness were beginning to sink

12 At least for Julian; for Libanius the Olympic Games still honoured Zeus. Many Antiochenes evidently did not think attendance incompatible with Christianity.

13 The transformation of paganism into a private religion is a principal theme of I. Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity, Greeks, Jews and Christians at Antioch*, Cambridge 2007.

14 Otherwise E. Soler, *Le Sacré et le salut à Antioche au iv^e siècle apr. J.C.*, Beirut 2006, 240.

15 P.-L. Malosse, *Antioche et le Kappa*, in *Antioche de Syrie*, Lyon 2004, 77–96.

16 *CTh* xvi, 10, 4 (354); 10, 6 (356).

17 *Lib. Or.* 1, 27; xxx, 6; xiv, 41.

18 *Lib. ep.* 695, 2; more references in P. Petit, *Libanius et la vie municipale à Antioche au iv^e siècle après J.-C.*, Paris 1955, 196–198.

in. Smoking had lost the moral high ground. Perhaps something similar had happened to the sacrificial rites,¹⁹ and so the temples fell into disuse and ruin, just as many public houses in England to day. However it must also be remembered that neither the law of Constantius, nor its repetition by Theodosius I and again by later emperors, succeeded in stamping out blood sacrifices by private individuals, and occasionally at least in the fourth century even by imperial officials.²⁰

I have maintained that the élite at Antioch, that is the people we hear about and who had most influence in the public life of the city, were already largely Christian. Though we lack the evidence to assess the importance of the Christian élite in numerical terms, it would seem that already in the mid-fourth century Christians in the *curia* of Antioch were more influential than Christians in the *curiae* of some of the cities of Numidia decades later.²¹ We have another indicator of the relatively high proportion of Christians among the leading citizens of Antioch. Among the imperial governors of oriental provinces in the fourth century whose religion is known, at all but the highest level more than half were pagans, and the proportion was significantly higher in the mid fourth century than in the 390s. This suggests that pagans were more numerous in the élite of cities of the East generally, than at Antioch.²²

We have some evidence about Christianisation at a lower social level in the epigraphy of villages in the limestone massif to the east of Antioch. Christian inscriptions on lintels of houses and tombstones begin in the 330s. Inscriptions that are explicitly pagan soon become rare.²³ The emperor Julian noticed that

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- 19 E. Ferguson, *Spiritual sacrifice in early Christianity and its environment*, in *ANRW* II, 23, 2, Berlin – New York 1980, 1151–1189; R.P.C. Hanson, *The Christian attitude to pagan religion up to the time of Constantine the Great*, *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt (ANRW)*, II.23.2, 910–973; S.F.R. Price, *Ritual and Power. The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*, Cambridge 1984, 229; the feast becomes more important than the sacrifice, enabling festal slaughter to continue in a secularised form.
 - 20 F.R. Trombley, *The legal status of sacrifice to 529 AD*, in *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c.370-529*, vol. 1, Leiden – New York – Cologne 1993, 1–97. I am not convinced that the undated *CJ.* I, 11, 9 & I, 11, 10, which seem intended to finally crush paganism, and which are usually dated to 529, were in fact issued c. 481–84, soon after the rebellion of Illus, to punish the pagans for their participation.
 - 21 See C. Lepelley, *Les cités de l'Afrique romaine au Bas-Empire*, I, Paris 1979, 352–414.
 - 22 The argument is based on P. Petit, *Libanius et la vie municipale à Antioche au iv^e siècle après J.-C.*, Paris 1955, 202, and assumes that the proportion of pagan officials is related to the proportion of pagans in the *élites* of the cities from which they were drawn.
 - 23 W. Liebeschuetz, *Epigraphic evidence on the Christianisation of Syria*, in *Akten des XI Internationalen Limeskongresses*, Budapest 1981, 485–508.

inhabitants of the countryside between Antioch and Beroea (Aleppo) were markedly unenthusiastic about paganism.²⁴ But the territory can be said to have been fully Christianised only between 365 and 425.²⁵

The fact that Christianity was now the predominant religion of Antioch did not of course mean that all traces of paganism had disappeared from the city's culture. Far from it! In fact the division of the population into sharply divided religious groups is certainly misleading. It is likely that at Antioch as elsewhere many individuals had not decisively opted for any one particular religious allegiance, but hedged their bets by placing their hopes now in the rituals of one group, now in those of another.²⁶ Some twenty years later Chrysostom was to complain that individuals who belonged to his congregation nevertheless thought that oaths taken in a synagogue and attention to the sick by a rabbi were particularly effective. People continued to observe many practices which were certainly of pagan origin.²⁷ At the same time the annual cycle of festivals which gave variety and entertainment to the inhabitants of Antioch was still that of the pagan religious calendar. Traditional festivals continued to be popular. Best documented of all are the Kalends,²⁸ the celebrations marking the New Year. But evidently the May festival, the Maiouma, was still very much alive in the mid-fourth century. This was a water festival which may have once been associated with Dionysus and Aphrodite. It was celebrated with nocturnal processions and theatrical shows involving dancing and water.²⁹ The festival of Artemis too was still being celebrated in May, with a boxing competition for which each of the eighteen tribes of the city provided a boxer.³⁰ Early in summer there followed the festival of Calliope with theatrical shows and

24 Julian, *ep.* 58 (ed. Wright in Loeb library = 98 ed. Bidez).

25 See F.R. Trombley's thorough survey: '*The Antiochene and the Apamene*', in his '*Hellenic Religion and Christianization*', vol. 11, Leiden/New York/Cologne 1994, 246–295.

26 L. Brottier, *Jean Chrysostome: un pasteur face à des demi-chrétiens*, in M.-F. Boussac (ed.) *Topoi Suppl. 5, Antioche de Syrie, histoire, images et traces de la ville antique*, Lyon 2004, 439–57. For example Chrysostom, *Hom. in ep. ad Titum* 3, 2 in PG 62. 679, warning not to visit sanctuary of Saturn in Cilicia, or the grotto of Matrona at Daphne. For an empire—wide view of this problem see Majastina Kahlos on what she calls the *incerti*, in her *Debate and Dialogue, Christian Pagan Cultures c. 360–430*, Aldershot 2007, 30–48.

27 J.I. Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge 2006, 148–161; and below.

28 Lib. *Or* IX, vol. 1.472ff (ed. Forster).

29 See n. 36, below.

30 Lib. *Or.* v, 43–51.

chariot races,³¹ and the mourning for the death of Adonis in July.³² In autumn at the time of the wine harvest came the festival of Dionysus when hymns to Dionysus were still sung everywhere.³³ In the time of Libanius the Olympic Games, originally held in honour of Zeus, continued to take place regularly every four years.

We do not have information about the ultimate history of most of these festivals, but Robert Markus has shown that the celebrations of pagan festivals, in a “disinfected” form, that is without the explicit worship of pagan deities, and above all without animal sacrifices, continued in many cities in the West well into the 5th century.³⁴ At Rome the Lupercalia were still being celebrated at the end of the fifth century.³⁵ In the East too the old festivals continued, no doubt in a modified form. For example the Maiouma was observed through the fifth, and even into the sixth century, in various places all round the Mediterranean, at a variety of dates, and in the name of a variety of gods. At Antioch, although the festival was morally suspect even to some pagans, it was still being celebrated, indeed it even received new endowments, as late as AD 431, in the reign of the pious Christian emperor Theodosius II. By then it must have shed all connections with the worship of pagan divinities.³⁶ In the early sixth century Severus, patriarch of Antioch (512–18), and Jacob of Serugh attacked chariot racing and theatricals very much as Chrysostom had done in the 4th century.³⁷ In the long run the attacks of the clerics were not without effect. The Olympic Games at Antioch were stopped in AD 520.³⁸ It seems that from the late fourth century floor mosaics decorated with scenes drawn from pagan mythology went out of fashion. Gods and heroes were replaced by

31 Lib. *ep.* 811.

32 Ammianus XXII, 9, 14; XIX, 1, 11. Julian entered the city in 362 amid women wailing for Adonis, a bad *omen*.

33 Lib. *epp.* 661, 1480, 1288, 1212.

34 R.A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, Cambridge 1990, 107–123. On the East see the important book of H. Saradi, *The Byzantine City in the Sixth Century*, Athens 2006, 293–324.

35 R.A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, 131–135.

36 N. Belayche, *Une panégyrie antiochénne: “le maïouma”*, in *Antioche de Syrie*, Lyon 2004, 401–415.

37 F.N. Alpi, *Société et vie profane à Antioche sous le patriarcat de Sévère (512–518)*, in *Antioche de Syrie*, Lyon 2004, 519–542, relevant 531–533; C.A. Moss, *Jacob of Serugh’s homilies on the spectacles of the theatre*, “Le Muséon” 48 (1935), 87–112; F. Griffin, *La vie à Antioche d’après les homélies de Sévère. Invectives contre les courses de chevaux, le theatre et les jeux Olympiques*, in *Erkenntnisse und Meinungen*, ed. G. Wiessner, Wiesbaden 1978, 115–130.

38 Malalas XVII, 13, 417.

personified abstractions of virtues and by geometric patterns.³⁹ But cultural transformation naturally was a very slow process. Festivals and their customs tend to outlive their gods. Customs that were associated with the Kalends, as it was celebrated at Antioch in the time of Libanius, have survived linked to Christmas even until today.⁴⁰ The dominant religion had changed, but civic culture changed much more slowly.⁴¹

2 The Christian Reaction

The fact that the gods had obviously not supported Julian certainly was a heavy blow to paganism. The restoration of the old cults was discredited. There followed a certain Christian reaction with prosecution of some followers of Julian and the mass treason trial of 371, which involved the condemnation of a number of philosophers, and the burning of books.⁴² Libanius himself was in great danger.⁴³ Neither letters nor orations⁴⁴ survive from this period. Libanius evidently was determined not to leave any writings around which could be used to incriminate him. Antioch was filled with fear. The affair certainly did involve attacks on men who had been prominent under Julian, but it can nevertheless not be diagnosed as simply religious persecution. Religion was mixed with politics. The trials were to some extent an aftermath of the usurpation of Procopius, the unsuccessful usurper who had been a relative of Julian, and no doubt was hoping for support from men who had followed Julian. The main

39 W. Liebeschuetz, *From Antioch to Piazza Armerina and back again*, in *Mélanges de l'université Saint-Joseph*, 60 (2007), *Mélanges en l'honneur de Jean-Paul Rey-Coquais*, 135–151, esp. 145–148, in this volume 370–388; J. Balty, *Mosaïques antiques du proche Orient*, Paris 1995.

40 Lib. Or. IX, in *Libanios Discours* II–X, ed. J. Martin, Paris 1988, 196–200. John Chrysostom, *In Kalendas*, in PG 48, 954 ff.; E. Soler, *Le sacré et le salut à Antioche au iv^e siècle*, bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique 176, Beirut 2006, 24–27; M. Meslin, *La fête des Calendes de Janvier dans l'empire romain*, Brussels 1970, describes the “after-life” of some of its customs.

41 On persistence of pagan festivals see M.R. Salzman, *Religious Koine and Religious Dissent in the Fourth century*, in *A Companion to Roman Religion*, ed. J. Rüpke, Oxford 2007, 109–125.

42 F.J. Wiebe, *Kaiser Valens und die heidnische Opposition*, Bonn 1995.

43 Ammianus XXIX, 1, 1–2.16; Lib. Or. I, 156–178 deal with this troubled period, cf. J. Wintjes, *Das Leben des Libanius*, Historische Studien der Universität Würzburg,, Rahden/Westf. 2005, 163–76.

44 No orations between Or. XVIII (the funeral oration on Julian) and 374 Or. I, the first edition of the Autobiography. The next speech is Or. XXIV, *On avenging of Julian* of 378/9. This begins the long sequence of late political speeches.

issue was about who was to rule the Empire, not whether the ancestral cults were to be replaced by Christianity. These events are not well documented. We do not know whether there was any deterioration in the previously good relations between Christians and pagans in the city.

3 Pagans and Christians in the age of John Chrysostom

Our evidence about the religious situation at Antioch becomes extremely abundant again in the 380s when the orations of Libanius are supplemented by the writings and, after 386, the sermons of John Chrysostom (c. 349–407). Chrysostom wrote the greater part of his very large output at Antioch. He was ordained in 386, and his sermons date from that time. But some of his treatises are earlier. Among his earliest writings is the treatise on St Babylas composed around 380 when Julian's attempt to revive paganism was still an issue. Chrysostom's treatise is designed to show, among other things, that Julian was wrong and that Christianity is the true religion.⁴⁵ The *De Sancto Babyla* is rather discursive but it falls essentially into two halves, the legendary story of how Babylas prevented a wicked emperor from entering a church and the saint's subsequent martyrdom, and the power demonstrated by his relics during Julian the Apostate's stay at Antioch. The first half is remarkable for the extraordinarily forceful assertion of the priest's right and duty to reprimand even an emperor, to expel him from his church, as a shepherd would chase a diseased sheep from his fold, or a landlord a dog, or unruly slave from his yard.⁴⁶ It is an ideological anticipation of the way Ambrose compelled the emperor Theodosius to do penance after the massacre at Thessalonica, though the language is much more radical than that used by Ambrose in his famous letter. The story, though legendary, was no doubt an essential part of the tradition about Babylas, and its point that a priest must rebuke even an emperor who has committed a serious sin, even if he is a Christian, is relevant to a treatise which culminates in an account of the conflict of the Church with Julian the Apostate. One wonders nevertheless why Chrysostom has made so much of the story, which was legendary—as he may well have conjectured⁴⁷—and concerned a conflict not with a pagan but with a supposedly Christian emperor.

45 Jean Chrysostom, *Discours sur Babylas*, éd. et trad. par M.A. Schatkin, C. Blanc, B. Grillet, suivi de *Homélie sur Babylas*, éd. et tr. B. Grillet, J.-N. Guinot, Paris 1990.

46 Ibid., 30 and 47 in PG 50, 6, 541 and 9, 546.

47 Chrysostom leaves the emperor anonymous.

Perhaps he was thinking not so much of the position of the Church under the pagan Julian, as under Valens, the *homoian* Christian.⁴⁸

The second half of the work describes how the relics of Babylas defeated the paganism of Julian. The Caesar Gallus transferred the relics of Babylas to a new martyrrium at Daphne. The arrival of the relics immediately raised moral standards in what had previously been the notoriously easy going and licentious life at Daphne. More impressively still, the relics silenced the oracle of Apollo. Julian had the relics of Babylas moved back to their old resting place in a cemetery outside Antioch. Almost immediately after, the temple of Apollo at Daphne caught fire. The flames destroyed the timber roof, and the famous cult-statue of Apollo. In his monody Libanius had regretted that the pagan gods, especially Apollo and Zeus, were mourning the destruction of their sanctuary, but had done nothing to save the temple. Chrysostom gleefully points out that this proved the hopeless weakness of the supposed gods when faced by an act of God, and the foolishness of the Hellenes who had allowed themselves to be so deceived by demons. God gave Julian a chance to repent, but the emperor continued his campaign against Christianity and paid the penalty: he was killed and his huge army destroyed.

Chrysostom wrote a second apology, *Christ's divinity proved against Jews and pagans*. This like *De Sancto Babyla* represents a late response to Julian's attempt to restore paganism. It bears a definite resemblance to the *De Sancto Babyla* and was therefore probably written about the same time. Its argument is that the expansion and triumph of Christianity proves the truth of its teaching, and thus the divinity of Christ. The title of the treatise is misleading in that the pamphlet has no separate section directed against the Jews. So it probably is a fragment which was never completed. Chrysostom continued to think that the Jews of Antioch presented him with a problem. But the problem was not the Jews themselves, but the Christians who insisted on combining Christian worship with participation in some ceremonies of the Jews, in other words tried to get the benefit of both religions.⁴⁹ This Chrysostom would not tolerate, and on the eve of the Jewish high festivals in autumn 386 he interrupted a series of sermons against the Anomoeans to deliver the first of a series of quite vicious sermons to deter members of his congregation from judaising; a second sermon in January 387 warned members of his congregation against

48 He may also have thought that the murder of the boy hostage by the anonymous emperor of the third century resembled in wickedness the murder of the young Armenian king Pap by the officers of Valens (Ammianus XXX, 1, 1–23).

49 R. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews. Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourth Century*, Berkeley – Los Angeles 1983.

celebrating Easter at the same time as the Jewish Passover, and in autumn of the same year he delivered no less than five sermons telling his auditors that their participating in a variety of Jewish rites was totally incompatible with their Christianity.⁵⁰

It is probably significant that once Chrysostom had become a priest, that is after 386, he only very occasionally preached whole sermons against pagans and paganism, and references to paganism in sermons focused on other themes are relatively rare.⁵¹ Chrysostom compares the pagans to children who are happy to spend their lives playing on the floor, and who merely laugh when an adult tries to talk to them about serious matters.⁵² Compared with Judaism, and of course the community of *homoian* Christians, whom he, like other upholders of the Nicene creed, describes as Arians, Chrysostom evidently did not consider the traditional cults to be serious rivals of Nicene Christianity. Chrysostom had evidently decided that paganism as a public religion was no longer self-sustaining. It needed support of a pagan emperor, which it had briefly regained under Julian.⁵³ Without such support it was helpless, and would presumably fade away. It was no longer necessary to refute it.

Chrysostom of course remained very much involved in the conflicts dividing the Christian community at Antioch, the conflict between those who accepted the Creed of Nicaea (Nicens, *Homoeousians*) and those who did not (*Homoians* or for their opponents, Arians), and the schism dividing the Nicens between those who recognised Flavianus as their bishop, and those who recognized Euagrius. Chrysostom was strongly engaged on the side of the Nicens, and in the rivalry of Flavianus and Euagrius he was committed to the side of Flavianus, and he surely was the most effective preacher of that group. A paper on pagans and Christians is not the place to go into detail about the complicated story of the Antiochene schisms. It must suffice to point out that Chrysostom's principal contribution to the Nicene cause was not his contribution to theology and dogmatic argument, but the bonds he managed to build up between himself and his congregation by his passionate and eloquent preaching.

50 Ibid.: texts in PG 48, 843–942; english tr. by P.W. Harkins, *Discourses against Judaizing Christians*, Washington 1977. See also R. Zadé, *Les martyres Maccabées. Les homélies de Grégoire de Nazianze et de Jean Chrysostome*, Supplement to “Vigiliae Christianae” 80, Leiden 2007.

51 E.g. *Hom. in ep. ad Ephes.* 12. Chrysostom argues that neither the sun nor water are gods, and that pagans consider things sinful that are not, such as filthiness of the body, the pollution of a funeral, the keeping of particular days, but take no account of real sins such as unnatural lust, adultery, fornication.

52 *Hom. in ep. 1 ad Cor.* 4, 6 in PG 61, 38–40.

53 *De St Babyla* 41–42 in PG 50, 7, 544. In contrast Christianity flourishes under persecution.

But if the religious ceremonies and theology—if that is the right word—of paganism did not worry Chrysostom, the many secularized relics of the traditional religion that were still conspicuous in the life and culture of Antioch did trouble him. Chrysostom was concerned not so much with conversion, as with Christianisation. He wanted to make Antioch and the whole culture totally Christian. The objective of his sermons is not to prove that Christianity is true, but to Christianise as thoroughly as possible the lives of the members of his congregations. It was not enough to go to church on Sundays, though that was of course important, but Christianity should come to shape every aspect of life. Monks had developed a way of life which aimed at living the morality of the New Testament in its totality. In the majority of the sermons he seems principally concerned to persuade his congregation that something like the way of life which had been pioneered by Christian ascetics could be, and indeed must be, adopted by lay-people. Of course the ordinary Christians of Antioch were far from doing this. Their customs had been shaped by many centuries of urban life, and adherence to Christianity and even baptism did not, and could not, shake their instinctive sense of what was right and proper, and what was not. They thought nothing wrong in attending chariot races or the theater, or in women to wearing attractive dresses and make up, in swearing oaths, and thus from a Christian point of view taking the name of God in vain, in dubbing mud on the foreheads of children to guard them from the evil eye, in traditional ways of choosing names for children⁵⁴ or the traditional license and merry-making of wedding ceremonies,⁵⁵ or during the celebrations of the New Year,⁵⁶ or the simple the enjoyment of dancing.⁵⁷ Chrysostom accepted the established custom of the funeral banquets, but he disapproved of subsequent mourning, because this implied a denial of the Christian teaching of an after-life. Mourning was appropriate for one's sins, but not for deaths.⁵⁸

The mass of the Christians of Antioch evidently did not see any incompatibility between such ancestral customs and habits, and their considering themselves Christians, attending church on Sundays more or less regularly,

54 *Hom. in 1 Cor. 12, 7* in PG 61, 106, instead mark them with sign of the cross. Cf. E. Soler, *Le sacré et le salut* (n.14 above), 27–29 on more traditional “superstitions” practised by Christians.

55 *Hom. in Coloss. 12; In 1 Cor. 12, 5* in PG 61, 103.

56 *Hom. in Kalend.* in PG 48, 953–962.

57 *Hom. in Matth. 48, 3* in PG 58, 491: “Where there is dancing, the devil is also there . . . For God did not give us feet for that purpose, but to walk with discipline . . . not for us to leap like camels”.

58 *Hom. in Matth. 27, 3* in PG 57, 347–50; *Hom. in Gen. 45, 2* in PG 54, 416; *Hom. de stat. 5, 6–14* in PG 49, 70–8. More references in J.I. Maxwell *Christianization* (n.27), 160.

and eventually having themselves baptized. But from the point of view of Chrysostom, inspired as he was by the idealism of the ascetic movement, this state of affairs was intolerable, and required fundamental reform.⁵⁹ So in his sermons Chrysostom demanded self-critical introspection, study of the Bible, an ascetic life-style, and above all charitable giving. He required his hearers to abstain from all the secularized relics of paganism and superstitions, and above all to stay away from the public games. He preached at the festivals of the martyrs whose martyria were situated around the walls of the city, and at festivals commemorating Nicene bishops. He delivered a sermon when Christmas was for the first time celebrated at Antioch on 25 December, in 386.⁶⁰ We have three brief sermons⁶¹ which Chrysostom preached on the festival of the Maccabee martyrs, presumably in the church, which according to a late tradition was a confiscated synagogue.⁶² A Christian festival calendar was coming into being, which would eventually replace the traditional pagan one.

Chrysostom's objectives have been well summarized by J.I. Maxwell: "Chrysostom's immediate objective in preaching was [...] the inculcation of Christian habits. Chrysostom's goal was not social change but to encourage a life conducive to collective salvation... Everyone would have a Christian response to any situation". The Christian ethos had to become all embracing, to become common sense, to become habit, and so to be taken for granted. Only if he or she achieved this, could a Christian be sure of salvation.⁶³ But this was inevitably a very slow process.

4 **Creation of a Christian Identity was the Result, not the Purpose of Preaching**

One is bound to ask why Chrysostom, and so many of his colleagues, insisted that it was necessary for society to be totally Christianised, moreover Christianised in accordance with their own particular brand of Christianity.

59 Ibid., 148–161.

60 PG 49, 351–362.

61 PG 50, 617–628.

62 Chrysostom says nothing about the confiscation, or indeed about the location where he was speaking. See J. Hahn, *Gewalt und religiöser Konflikt* (n.1 above), 180–188 for a very plausible argument that the building over the supposed graves of the Maccabee martyrs had never been a synagogue. The graves were probably only near the synagogue, and the building over them was a Christian church from the beginning, as is stated by Augustine, *Sermo* 300, 6 in PG 38, 1379, of 391 or later.

63 J.I. Maxwell *Christianization* (n.27), 147–148.

I do not think it at all helpful to describe his efforts as a directed at the creation of a particular religious identity, an unmistakable identity which would differentiate Christians, or simply Nicene Christians from every other groups, as has been argued in an important recent book: "Chrysostom stood at the end of a long line of Christian leaders who sought [...] to construct a Christian identity. Chrysostom wanted to define clearly what it meant to be a Christian. This meant preaching the meaning of Christian identity at every possible opportunity."⁶⁴ This description of the objective of Chrysostom and of other Christian leaders⁶⁵ is not helpful, because it does not describe what the preachers thought that they were doing, and it does not explain why congregations found their preacher's demands persuasive. First of all Chrysostom and his colleagues did not think that they were creating something new. They thought that they were propagating New Testament teaching. Of course there was innovation too. The situation of Christianity had been radically changed by the conversion of the emperor Constantine and the numerous conversions that followed, and now the ascetic movement was making new demands. This required a great deal of adaptation and clarification. But adaptation to a changing environment was merely acceleration of a continuing more or less subconscious process.

The objective of Chrysostom, and his colleagues, was much wider, and their purpose was after all much grander than the creation of a new identity. What he asked of his congregation was what he thought was full implementation of the Christian religion, and Christian religion was not something that Chrysostom, or any of his contemporaries, were constructing, but a body of teaching founded on the Bible and expanded and developed in the traditions of the Church. The dynamics of their campaign was derived from the fact that they felt that they were doing God's will. When the great pagan senator Symmachus had insisted that the great mystery of that great a secret (that is God) could be reached by more than one route, Ambrose, bishop of Milan, replied "you have admitted that you are ignorant of what you worship... we know with certainty, directly from the wisdom and truth of God" (i.e. the

64 I. Sandwell, *Religious Identity* (n.13 above), 277. This book is full of interesting information about the religious situation at Antioch in the fourth century, especially about the "privatisation" and internalisation of the traditional cults. But the application of the discourse of identity, in the sense in which the word is currently used by sociologists and many historians, ignores what the individuals concerned were fearing, thinking and doing, and therefore does not help to understand the causes of change.

65 M. Harl, *La dénonciation des festivités profanes dans les discours épiscopaux et monastiques en Orient chrétien à la fin du IV^e siècle*, in *La fête, pratique et discours*, "Annales littéraires de l'Université de Besançon" 262 (1981), 41–84.

Bible). Chrysostom, like Ambrose and the other Church Fathers, was certain that there was only one correct belief, and one correct way of life; and this conviction had been part of Christianity, at least of the Christianity preached by leaders of the Churches from the beginning, as it already had been that of the compilers of the Old Testament. These people did not advocate plain living, giving away riches to the poor, the staying away from the circus and theater, and they did not recommend that girls should dedicate their virginity to Jesus, that widows should not remarry, that everybody should give up swearing, and so on, in order to make Christians different from their fellow citizens, but because they believed that the behaviour they taught was commanded by God, and necessary for salvation; and if these sermons were at all persuasive, it was by and large,⁶⁶ because the hearers believed that they were being correctly informed about the purposes of God. Preachers wanted their congregation to be distinguishable from pagans, but not because difference was good in itself, but because it was better to be seen doing what is right than what is wrong, and because mingling endangered salvation.⁶⁷

Human motivation is mixed. At one level the demand for total Christianisation was about God's will being fulfilled on earth, but at another and less conscious level, it was about power. Chrysostom and many of his colleagues were participating in a wider offensive on the part of Christianity, and particularly Nicene Christianity, against paganism and heresy. In the 380s, while Chrysostom was preaching in the city, monks were destroying pagan temples in the countryside east of Antioch, and the bishop of the neighbouring city of Apamea was demolishing the principal temple of that city.⁶⁸ The Western emperor Gratian had cut the connection between the Roman state, and the old Roman religion, and both he in the West, and Theodosius in the East had put the whole weight of the Roman state behind Nicene Christianity. Laws were issued penalizing paganism and non-Nicene Christianity. One factor behind these developments was the ascetic movement which was radicalizing Christianity.⁶⁹ At the same time the fact that the emperor and many of

66 Allowing for the fact that decisions about how to live are always influenced by a range of factors.

67 M. Kahlos, *Debate and Dialogue, Christian and Pagan Culture c.360–430*, Aldershot 2007, 133 (on Augustine).

68 See F.R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization*, vol. 1, Leiden/New York/Cologne 1992, 123–129.

69 One might compare the influence of “intransigent evangelical Protestantism” in Brazil referred to by Peter Brown, “Pagans and Christians at the Warburg Institute”, in P. Brown and R. Lizzi Testa (eds) 2011, 14–28 on 23.

his leading officials,⁷⁰ and in cities like Antioch a large part of the population, was now Christian made the objective of a totally Christianised society seem achievable.

Chrysostom himself was well aware that he was demanding a lot. He therefore advised his congregation that they should start by trying to observe those commandments that are relatively easy to fulfill.⁷¹ So he repeatedly, seemingly obsessively, tells his congregation that they should make an effort to obey the Third Commandment:⁷² “You shall not take the Lord’s name in vain” and stop themselves from swearing. Moreover his regular urging that his hearers must give up going to the theatre, or in the case of women to stop wearing make up, are fairly superficial changes in life style, and therefore relatively easy to adopt. To judge by the number of times the same demands are repeated in sermon after sermon, Chrysostom did not believe that he was changing the habits of his congregation, never mind the culture of his city, very much. In fact the transformation of a century old culture cannot be achieved quickly. It is bound to be a very slow process, drawn out over centuries. The end of the public spectacles attacked by Chrysostom and generations of Christian preachers was only brought about by the decline and fall of the classical city itself.

5 Christian Numbers

How numerous were Christians at Antioch in the 380s? Chrysostom claimed that Christians at Antioch amounted to 100,000 persons,⁷³ perhaps half the population of the city.⁷⁴ We don’t know whether this is just a rhetorical claim, or an estimate based on evidence. In any case we don’t know by what criteria Chrysostom would have classified an individual as a Christian, i.e. what precisely in the way of church-linked activities he considered the minimum necessary to qualify. He could hardly have insisted on regular church attendance. Antioch did not have enough churches. There was the Old, or Apostolic, Church which had been rebuilt between 314 and 324, after its destruction during the Great Persecution.⁷⁵ There was the octagonal cathedral, the Great Church, on

70 J. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364–425*, Oxford 1975, 101–153.

71 *Hom. in Act.* 8.

72 *Exodus* 20, 7.

73 *Hom. in Matth.* 85, 4 in PG 58, 762: cf. W. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch* (n.9), 93–94.

74 200,000 inhabitants according to *Hom. in Ignatium* 4 in PG 50, 59; on population of Antioch, see W. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch* (n.9), 92–96.

75 G. Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria*, Princeton 1961, 336.

the Island near the palace, dedicated in 341.⁷⁶ These were the only churches of which we can be certain that they existed at the time of Julian. Around 380 there was a church over the tomb of the Maccabees.⁷⁷ Between 379 and 381 bishop Meletius built the cruciform church of St Babylas. These churches presumably had regular weekly services.

Antioch was surrounded by *martyria*. We know that the Caesar Gallus built a *martyrium* for St Babylas in Daphne in the neighbourhood of the temple of Apollo in the 350s. The *martyria* nearer to Antioch cannot be dated. They were situated in Christian cemeteries. There was a collective *martyrium* in the Christian cemetery outside the Daphne Gate where St Julianus was buried, among the relics of other saints. Another collective *martyrium* was situated in a cemetery beyond the Romanesian Gate. A third *martyrium*, that of St Drosis, was somewhat further out.⁷⁸ We do not know whether any of the sanctuaries that housed the sacred remains were large enough to house a significant congregation. The sites of none have so far been identified. But *martyria* certainly attracted large crowds to the festival of their martyr. They also regularly attracted families for funerals, and the banquets that commemorated the anniversary of the dead buried *ad sanctos*. In addition it can surely be taken for certain that many men and women came to pray at the tombs of the martyrs.⁷⁹

The Church's social work provided another link between the population of the city and the Church. The church fed three thousand virgins every day and gave aid to prisoners.⁸⁰ It provided food and clothing to men whose names were entered on a register and who presented themselves day by day.⁸¹ Chrysostom complained that many of the clergy spent so much time in the administration of almsgiving that few were left for the care of souls.⁸² We can be sure that very many inhabitants of Antioch had some contact with the Church. The size of the Christian community of Antioch in the later fourth century should therefore not be underestimated on the ground that there were possibly only two or three churches inside the city at that time. Chrysostom claimed that there were 100,000 Christians at Antioch.⁸³ What we do not know is how many of the "the

76 Ibid., 358.

77 Ibid., 448, but see n. 62 above.

78 On *martyria* and their festivals see also E. Soler, *Le Sacré et le Salut* (n.40), 201–208, see also (*honoris causa*), H. Delehay, *Les origines du culte des martyres*, Brussels 1933, 192–207.

79 E. Soler, *Le Sacré et le Salut* (n.40), 209–210 on Chrysostom's *In martyres*, in PG 50, 664.

80 *Hom. in Matth.* 66 in PG 57, 658.

81 *Hom. in I Ep ad Cor.* 15 in PG 61, 179.

82 *Hom. in Matth.* 85 in PG 57, 761–62.

83 *Hom. in Matth* 85, 4 in PG 57, 762.

ordinary men or women” who considered him or herself a Christian accepted that adherence to Christianity was incompatible with participation in any other cult. Certainly many could have identified themselves as Christians and thought nothing wrong in participating in other cults. Indeed not all individuals who now and again participated in Christian activities necessarily identified themselves simply as Christians.

While there are too many uncertainties for us to reach a meaningful estimate of the numerical strength of the Christian population of Antioch, there can be no doubt that Christianity was now a very powerful force in the city. This was shown clearly on the occasion of the Riot of the Statues. The riot started as a protest against a new tax. A large number of notables crowded into the governor’s courtyard to proclaim the city’s inability to pay, and to obtain relief from the new burden. They were heard to call on the god of the Emperor Theodosius, i.e. Jesus, for aid. When the demonstration at the governor’s palace met with no response, a larger crowd marched to the residence of the bishop Flavianus to obtain his support. When they could not find him, the peaceful protest turned to a riot which culminated in the overthrow of imperial images.⁸⁴ When the city was threatened with terrible punishment for this act of rebellion, bishop Flavianus travelled to Constantinople to plead for the city.⁸⁵ Antioch had begun to speak with a Christian voice.⁸⁶

6 Christians and Pagans in the Fifth Century and John Malalas

We have no sources which are as informative about conditions at Antioch in the fifth century as the works of Libanius and John Chrysostom are for the second half of the fourth century. Above all we have no letter-collection. This means that we have no information about the religion of individuals. The pagans of Antioch have become almost invisible. But paganism was certainly far from extinct. In the middle of the century the sophist and philosopher Isocasius seems to have occupied a position at Antioch comparable to that of Libanius in the previous century. He achieved the high office of *quaestor*

84 Lib. *Or.* XIX, 25–27.

85 Frans van Paverd, *St John Chrysostom, the Homilies on the Statues*, Rome 1991. Flavianus’ supposed speech to Theodosius: *Hom. de statuīs* 21, in PG 49, 211–220. While Chrysostom gives all credit for the pardon to the bishop, Libanius gives it to the imperial officials. See *Ors.* XIX–XXXIII in *Libanius Selected Works* II, ed. and tr. A.F. Norman, Loeb Library, Cambridge – London 1977, 237–407.

86 Cf. P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*, Wisconsin 1992, 105–108.

at Constantinople, but was eventually compelled to convert to Christianity.⁸⁷ Theodoret, bishop of Cyrrhus who originated from Antioch, and presumably received his very full traditional education in that city, wrote a large treatise defending Christianity against pagan critics.⁸⁸ So presumably such critics existed and were worth answering.⁸⁹

Religion caused considerable disturbances at Antioch in the last quarter of the century. But these involved anti-Jewish rioting by the Green faction in the hippodrome, and conflict between upholders of the canons of the Council of Chalcedon and opponents of the Council, the so-called Monophysites. As far as our evidence goes, pagans as such played no part.⁹⁰ We have a remarkably detailed account of persecution of pagans instigated by students at Alexandria, Beirut and Aphrodisias between 485 and 491.⁹¹ This led to the desecration of a sanctuary of Isis, prosecutions on charges of magic, book burning and forced conversions. Both the Christian instigators and the pagan victims were highly educated intellectuals. It is likely that the Christian students received official backing for their anti-pagan activities because of the dangerous contemporary rebellion of the Isaurian general Illus⁹² in the years AD 484–88. For this whose rebellion received strong support from pagans who evidently hoped that pagans would be better off if he replaced Zeno the current emperor with his nominee, Leontius.⁹³ Illus and Leontius⁹⁴ for a time controlled Antioch, but we do not know how, if at all, Antiochene pagans were affected by this usurpation.⁹⁵ The rebellion of Illus is the last political episode in which pagans, upholding the cause of paganism, are reported to have played a part.⁹⁶ However that maybe, when the imperial government launched offensives against remaining adher-

87 PLRE II, 633–34 s.v. Isocasius; cf. G. Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucos to the Arab Conquest*, Princeton 1961, 483–484. No writings of his have survived.

88 Théodoret de Cyr, *Thérapeutique des maladies helléniques*, texte, introduction et trad. par P. Canivet, 2 vols, Paris 1958, on this ch. 20 in this volume, see also the ten orations translated into French by Y. Azéma: *Théodoret de Cyr. Discours sur la providence*, Paris 1954.

89 For an interesting discussion on apologetic and Christian/Pagan dialogue generally see M. Kahlos, *Debate and Dialogue* (67), 55–92.

90 G. Downey, *A History of Antioch* (n.87), 484–99; 504–507.

91 In these cities paganism was still very much alive in the late fifth century. See Zacharie le Scholastique, *Vie de Sévère*, ed. and tr. M.-A. Kugener, *POr.* 2/1, Paris 1903, 7–115, and the excellent discussion in F.R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization* . . . , II, 1–73.

92 PLRE II, 586–90, s.v. Illus 1.

93 F.R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization*, vol. II, (n.25), 20–29.

94 PLRE II, 670–71 s.v. Leontius 17.

95 G. Downey, *A History of Antioch* (n.27), 490–92.

96 F.R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization*, vol. I, (n.68), 81–97.

ents of the cults of the gods in the later sixth century, they still found individuals at Antioch to prosecute.

7 The Chronicle of John Malalas⁹⁷

The story of the zealous Christian students who launched attacks on pagan cults first at Alexandria, then at Beirut, illustrates the fact that throughout the fifth century, and for much longer, Christians continued to attend the traditional secular schools, that is schools where the education was based on the Greek or the Roman literary classics, of which classical mythology with its stories of the doings of gods and goddesses was an integral part. Every boy who was to make a name for himself in the law courts or the city council, or the Church, or above all in the imperial service would have to undergo this education, and in the course of it would inevitably acquire a profound familiarity with these thoroughly pagan stories. For at this time, and for long after, the traditional education was still the only one available. There were no Christian schools. But it was not only the educated who had their heads filled with stories about the pagan gods. Much of entertainment in the theatre was based on mythological stories. Libanius, who was almost as critical of what happened in the theatre as Chrysostom, nevertheless defended the dancers against criticism by austere moralists like himself with the argument that they provided an education for those who could not afford to go to school.⁹⁸ This situation was of course extremely unsatisfactory from the point of view those who were trying to establish a totally Christian culture.

This problem must have caused much discussion. It also produced a literature, most of which has been lost, but some of the lost authors are summarized in the *Chronicle* of Malalas. Malalas was probably a citizen of Antioch, and his *Chronicle* was almost certainly compiled at Antioch early in the sixth century⁹⁹ from a wide range of sources, though certainly less wide than suggested by

97 New edition by I. Thurn, *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* 35. Berlin 2012, An English translation based on the Oxford manuscript of Malalas, but taking into account other Greek, Latin Slavonic and Syriac texts which preserve material derived from Malalas: E. Jeffreys, M. Jeffreys, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of John Malalas*, Melbourne 1986. The same team has produced *Studies in Malalas*, eds. E. Jeffreys, R. Scott, B. Croke, Sydney 1990.

98 Or. LXIV and on it J. Haubold, R. Miles, *Communitality and theatre in Libanius*, in *Culture and Society in Later Antioch*, eds. I. Sandwell, J. Huskinson, Oxford 2004, 24–34.

99 The original edition may have ended around 528, see B. Croke, *The Early Development of Byzantine Chronicles*, in *Studies in Malalas* (n.97), 17–19.

names dropped in the text.¹⁰⁰ So Malalas gives us an Antiochene slant of a dialogue which must have been carried on all over the Greek East. What is more he presents the dialogue from the point of view of an Antiochene layman.

Though written from a strongly Christian point of view, Malalas's *Chronicle* is not in any sense an ecclesiastical history. Malalas view of history is biblical, in that he always sees the hand of God rewarding, and especially punishing, behind the events of history. He shows remarkably little interest in the contemporary religious conflict between those who accepted the decrees of Chalcedon and those who did not, the Monophysites.¹⁰¹ He does not record the development of the monastic movement. Of the famous St Symeon Stylites he records only the death and burial.¹⁰² The accession and death of bishops of Antioch, Constantinople, and occasionally elsewhere, are sometimes noted, but there is no attempt to record the history of the Church, its divisions, its councils, and its holy men, which we find in ecclesiastical historians. Malalas's focus is on secular events.

8 Malalas' Biblical Perspective

Following in the tradition of Eusebius, Malalas has fitted the events of early Greco-Roman history and of biblical history into a common chronology.¹⁰³ So David is said to have been a contemporary of Priam of Troy.¹⁰⁴ Solomon founded Palmyra to commemorate David's slaying of Goliath, which Malalas tells us took place on the site of that city.¹⁰⁵ When Croesus of Lydia consulted Apollo about his prospects against Kyros of Persia, Kyros was putting the same question to the Biblical prophet Daniel.¹⁰⁶

Since the Bible tells us that all mankind, with the exception of the family of Noah, was annihilated in the Flood, it inevitably follows that all subsequent human beings, including the Greek heroes and those individuals worshipped

100 E. Jeffreys, *The sources of Malalas*, in *Studies in Malalas* (n.97), 167–216.

101 See B. Croke, *The Early Development* (n.97), 15–17.

102 Malalas XIV, 369 (37).

103 B. Croke, *The Early Development* (n.97), 27–38; S. Muhlberger, *The historiographical background of the fifth-century chronicles*, in his *The Fifth Century Chronicles. Prosper, Hydatius and the Gallic Chronicle of 452*, Leeds 1990, 8–23. A. Momigliano, *Pagan and Christian historiography*, in *The Conflict of Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, ed. A. Momigliano, Oxford 1963, 79–99.

104 Malalas v, 91.

105 Malalas v, 143.

106 Malalas vi, 156.

by pagans as gods were descendants of Noah.¹⁰⁷ Of course the pagan gods could not remain gods. So the pre-history of Malalas's *Chronicle*, like earlier Christian Apologies,¹⁰⁸ refutes paganism by claiming that the so-called gods had really been human rulers and benefactors, and that their worship was in fact the cult of dead kings. But he goes further. The story of the gods transformed into human rulers is fitted into the framework of biblical history. Kronos (Saturn) is made into a descendant of Noah.¹⁰⁹ He becomes ruler of the West, and has a son Zeus Picus. He is called Zeus Picus because in Virgil and elsewhere the Latin god/ruler Picus is said to be a son of Saturn, and Saturn is identified with the Greek Kronos, the father of Zeus. So Zeus and Picus are identified. We see that this version manages to combine Roman and Greek mythologies—just as the Empire combined Greece and Italy. Subsequently Kronos/Saturn remained in the West, but his son Zeus Picus and his descendants became rulers in the East. Between them Kronos/Saturn and Zeus/Picus thus anticipated the divided Roman Empire.¹¹⁰ With perfect Christian logic Kronos and Zeus Picus, being descended from Noah, are then shown to have been the ancestors of all the principal gods and heroes, whose deeds in a somewhat reinvented form fill the first two books of Malalas' *Chronicle*. All mythological allusions to supernatural intervention by pagan gods are made harmless by giving them a naturalistic explanation.¹¹¹

In the process of being fitted into a Christian world view the characters and interests of some mythological individuals have been strangely changed. Aphrodite and Adonis are said to have been philosophers.¹¹² Heracles is said to have "conquered the seductive thoughts of evil desire with the club of

107 Malalas I, 9–12.

108 Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 21; Lactantius, *Inst. Div.* I, 14–15, 18.

109 Malalas I, 12–13.

110 That this extraordinary tale (Malalas I, 8–17; II, 28; II, 34; VI, 16–18) was not invented by Malalas is shown by B. Garstad, *The excerpta Latina Barbari and the Picus—Zeus narrative*, "Jahrbuch für internationale Germanistik" 34 (2002), 252–313. Garstad dates the original narrative to the fourth century, and tentatively assigns it to Bouittios of Antioch. See also his *The Assyrian hero's romantic interlude in Libya. A topos from Virgil in Pisander of Laranda, the Picus-Zeus narrative, and Nonnus of Panopolis*, "Eranos" 101 (2003)/1, 6–16.

111 The technique closely resembles that of Palaephatus, probably a contemporary of Aristotle, whom Malalas cites several times. See J. Stern, *Palaephatus* ἸΕΡΕΙ ΑΠΙΣΤΩΝ: *on Unbelievable Tales*, Teubner 1902 (text, translation introduction and commentary), Wauconda 1996. E. Hörling, *Mythos und Pistos in der christlichen Weltchronik des Johannes Malalas*, Lund 1980.

112 Malalas I, 13.

philosophy".¹¹³ To Hephaestus¹¹⁴ is attributed a law that Egyptian women must to be monogamous, and live chastely. It is difficult to take this seriously. Surely humour is intended. In the same spirit we are not only told that women wrestled at the Olympic Games,¹¹⁵ but also that the women who took part in the games practised philosophy, wrestled in leggings, i.e. did not perform naked like male athletes, and that they took part only after swearing a vow of chastity. We are also told that anyone, man or woman, who was crowned victor in the Olympic Games would remain chaste for the rest of his life, for he would be ordained and become a priest immediately after the end of the contest.¹¹⁶ It is difficult not to smile. Once again humour is surely intended.¹¹⁷

The Antiochene synthesis of Biblical history and Greek mythology involves an interesting change of perspective. Neither Greece, nor Italy, but the Near East was the source of human kind and human civilisation. This new perspective abolishes the classical superiority of Greeks and Romans over barbarians,¹¹⁸ The doctrine of the essential unity of all mankind was not invented at Antioch, but it was perhaps particularly relevant in that city of a very mixed population.

Though Malalas has few straightforward attacks on paganism, he does claim that several statues of a young women at Antioch and elsewhere commemorate the sacrifice of a maiden at the start of a building project.¹¹⁹ The passages all seem to come from the same source, and to have been inserted by Malalas into appropriate places in his own narrative. It has been suggested that they are derived from a work by the Antiochene Bouttios, and that they represent rather crude anti-pagan pagan polemic directed against Julian.¹²⁰ Malalas

113 Malalas I, 17–18.

114 Malalas I, 19.

115 Malalas XII, 288. This is in fact unlikely, as women were not even allowed to watch the games (Lib. Or. x, 30).

116 Malalas XII, 288.

117 For a perhaps comparable combination of seriousness with humour, see P. Chuvin, *Nonnos de Panopolis et la "deconstruction" de l'épopée*, Genève 2006, 249–270, esp. 260–263. See also W. Liebeschuetz, *Pagan mythology in the Christian Empire*, "Int. J. Class. Trad." 2 (1995)/2, 193–208.

118 As also in Theoderet, *Curatio affectionum Graecarum* I, 1–46, 50–52; V, 58–78.

119 x, 234 at Antioch by Tiberius; x, 268 by Zarbos at foundation of Anazarbos; XI, 276 by Trajan at Antioch; Perseus sacrifices Parthenope at Tarsus (II, 37), Alexander a virgin at foundation of Alexandria (VIII, 192), Augustus at foundation of Ancyra (IX, 222). C. Saliou, *Statues d'Antioche de Syrie dans la Chronographie de Malalas*, in S. Augusta Boularot, J. Beaucamp et al., *Centre de recherches d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance. Monographies* 24, Paris 2006, 69–95, relevant 78–85.

120 B. Garstad, *The Tyche sacrifices in John Malalas: Virgin sacrifice and Fourth-Century polemical history*, in "Illinois Classical Studies" 30 (2005), 83–136. Garstad suggests that Bouttios may also have been the source for the Zeus-Picus narrative.

engages in something like dialogue with pagans when he cites passages from the Hermetic corpus.¹²¹ These writings expounded a religious philosophy that was up to a point common to Christians and pagans. This had enabled Earlier Christian apologists, notably Lactantius, to quote Hermes, in support of Christian teachings. Malalas continues this tradition. He quotes a passage from the Hermetic writings which seems to reveal Hermes Trismegistus to have been a monotheist, and prophet of the coming into the world of “the Word”, the *logos*. In the same spirit Malalas made use of the so-called Orphic writings. These writings had been closely linked with the mysteries of Dionysus, and they were incorporated into the Neo-Platonism of the last pagans. But Malalas cites a long passage in which Orpheus appears to echo the biblical account of the creation, and to proclaim the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.¹²²

We see that Malalas tried to harmonise what had been conflicting traditions: pagan and Christian, Greek and Roman.¹²³ There is no compromise with polytheism and sacrifice, but a sustained attempt to reinterpret accepted stories and traditions and beliefs to make them compatible with a Christian world picture. Moreover this was clearly an important part of his project: for no fewer than six of Malalas’ eighteen books are concerned with “prehistory”, that is pagan mythology and biblical narrative merging into what we would call history proper.

9 Christians and Pagans at Antioch in the Sixth Century

There is no doubt that the accession of Justinian marked a new epoch in relations of pagans and Christians. In 529 the emperor Justinian issued some ferocious laws against the pagans, which if the empire had had the administrative strength to enforce them would have amounted to a prohibition of the old

¹²¹ Malalas I, 26–27.

¹²² Malalas IV, 73–6 = O. Kern, *Orphicorum fragmenta*, Berlin 1922, 62, 65, 233, cited by Malalas as from Timotheus, on whom E. Jeffreys, *Malalas’ Sources*, *Studies in Malalas*, Sydney 1990, 166–216, on 194–5.

¹²³ The same strategy is also found in *The Tübingen Theosophy*. See H. Erbse, *Fragmente griechischer Theosophie*, Leipzig (1941) 1995², and S. Brock, *A Syriac collection of prophecies of pagan philosophers*, “*Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica*” 14 (1983), 204–46; also *Some Syriac excerpts from Greek collections of pagan prophecies*, “*Vig. Christ.*” 38 (1984), 77–90. P.F. Beatrice, *Pagan wisdom and Christian theology according to the Tübingen Theosophy*, “*Journal of Early Christian Studies*” 3 (1995), 403–418. A combination of pagan and biblical material is also used in the Sybilline Oracles. See J.L. Lightfoot, *The Sybilline Oracles*, Oxford 2007.

religion and forceful conversion of such individuals as still adhered to it.¹²⁴ Of course the government was not able to enforce these laws systematically, but they furnished a legal basis for several waves of prosecution of alleged pagans in high positions. The first took place at Constantinople in 529. High officials were charged and their property confiscated. Some were executed.¹²⁵ There was a second wave of persecution of pagans at Constantinople in 545/46. Most of the victims were prominent intellectuals, sophist, lawyers and doctors.¹²⁶ Two men alleged to have been pagan priests at Antioch and two from Hierapolis were prosecuted in 562.¹²⁷ At Constantinople pagans were arrested and paraded, and books, statues and pictures of gods publicly destroyed in the arena.¹²⁸ These actions were unprecedented in that the charge was no longer the use of magic for treasonous purposes, but simply adherence to paganism, i.e. alleged evidence of having performed some kind of pagan ritual. The government now set out to compel what in the fourth century preachers like Chrysostom had tried to achieve by preaching.¹²⁹

Why did this happen? There is not enough evidence to see clearly the background to these persecutions. Some of the victims may have been Christians who had not given up belief in the effectiveness of some of the old cults. It is likely that in some cases the accusation was simply a convenient weapon to destroy political or private enemies. This was a period when a sequence of terrible disasters struck Antioch. In 526 a calamitous earthquake destroyed much of the city and killed many thousands (Malalas xvii, 19–22). There was another earthquake in 528 (Malalas xviii, 442–43). In 540 the city was captured and burnt by the Persians who proceeded to deport a large number of inhabitants (Malalas xviii, 480; Procopius II, 8, 20ff.). There were further earthquakes in 551, 557, 587, and 588. The year 542 saw the first of a series of empire-wide outbreaks of plague. Justinian's wars which had started so successfully proved very difficult to finish. The schism between those who with the emperor accepted the Council of Chalcedon, and those who rejected it, turned out impossible to resolve. A separate Monophysite Church was being set up. It might be suggested that in these circumstances pagans (and Jews and dissenting Christians) were

124 CI I, II, 9–10.

125 Malalas xviii, 449 (AD 529); Theophanes 6022 (AD 528).

126 John of Ephesus in *Pseudo-Dionysus of Tel Mahre*, Part III, 76–77 tr. W. Witakowski, Liverpool Translated Texts for Historians 22, (1996), 71–72.

127 Michael the Syrian 2, 271 (tr. Chabot).

128 Malalas xviii, 491.

129 Procopius HA 19, 11 suggests that Justinian's prosecution of pagans were motivated by a desire to confiscate their property.

seen as convenient scapegoats. But of course the laws on which the prosecutions relied preceded most of the disasters. One must conclude that Justinian and his ministers gave the enforcement of religious unity a higher priority than his predecessors had done.

Most of our not very abundant information about these prosecutions is from Constantinople,¹³⁰ although we do hear of accusations of pagans at other cities too.¹³¹ A series of prosecutions of alleged pagans was launched between 554 and 559 at Antioch. Some of the accused were condemned to work in hospitals, others interned in monasteries. Some were put to death.¹³² We are also told that certain pagans were miraculously foiled when they tried to pull down a picture of Symeon Stylites the Younger which a shopkeeper at Daphne had set up over his shop and honoured with lighted candles.¹³³ That is not very much. In fact we are not very well informed about the internal affairs of the city under Justinian. The last book of Malalas's *Chronicle* (AD 527–563) is no longer centred on Antioch. Apart from accounts of the great disasters that struck the city what we are told about affairs at Antioch mainly concerns ecclesiastical affairs. On the face of it Antioch was now a Christian city. After the second earthquake the acclamations in the hippodrome demanded that the city's name be changed to Theoupolis. The emperor agreed to the change, though the new name did not stick.¹³⁴

However, the city still housed some followers of the old religion, or at least individuals who could be put on trial for adhering to the old cults. Good evidence is provided in accounts of persecution of pagans later in the sixth century recorded in the *Ecclesiastical Histories* of Euagrius,¹³⁵ and of John of Ephesus.¹³⁶ This episode which began in 578/9 and was only concluded in 587/8 is interesting from several points of view. The prosecuting authority was

130 Malalas XVIII, 449; Theophanes 6022 (AD 528); Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahré 77–78 = Liverpool Translated Texts for Historians, 22 (1996), on pp. 71–72.

131 C 138 IG 8645 = *Sardis VII*, ed. W.H. Buckler, D.M. Robinson, Leiden 1932, no. 19.

132 *Vita Symeonis iunioris*, ed. Van den Ven, 2 vols., Brussels 1962–70, 146; F.R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianisation II*, (n.25), 181.

133 *Vita Symeonis iunioris* 172.

134 Malalas XVIII, 443 (AD 528).

135 P. Allen, *Evagrius Scholasticus, the Church Historian*, Louvain 1981, 320–322. Evagrius, *HE* (ed. Bidez and Parmentier), 5, 17–18.

136 John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History*, in CSCO, Ser. Syr. 55, Louvain 1936; English translation *The Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History of John, bishop of Ephesus*, tr. R. Payne Smith, Oxford 1860, relevant III, 27–34. Persecution of Pagans at Harran: A. Palmer, *The seventh Century West-Syrian Chronicles*, Liverpool Translated Texts for Historians 15 (1993), Text 13; Dionysius Reconstituted, p. 114.

as earlier the imperial government, but in this episode the large parts of the population were evidently passionately involved in the attack on the pagans. The government's action was clearly popular. Then the persecution was directed against members of the élite, especially at Antioch and Baalbek in Syria, and at Edessa in Mesopotamia. The government's prosecutions were launched by local accusations. So it looks as if there were some regional factors and local factions behind the accusations. It is notable that some of the accused were at least outwardly Christian. More extraordinary still, Gregorius, the "Diphysite" bishop of Antioch, was among those accused. There is evidence that Monophysites added their voice to the accusations against the "Diphysite" patriarch.¹³⁷ The prosecution of real and alleged pagans, or perhaps *incerti* or demi-christians¹³⁸ was only part of a situation of increasing conflict and disorder in the eastern provinces of the Empire in the late 6th century, in the years leading up first to the Persian and then the Arab invasions.¹³⁹

It is likely enough that among the individuals hit by this persecution were some real pagans. Some citizens surely remained loyal to their old cults. Many more, one would imagine, refused to recognise the total incompatibility of the old religion and the new, and hoped for supernatural help from a combination of each.¹⁴⁰ After all even today there are around two million and a half Alawites (Nusayri) in Syria, a sect allied to Shiite Islam, whose ritual and theology nevertheless has important elements clearly derived from Christianity, from Gnosticism and from ancient sun-worship.¹⁴¹

137 Cf. I. Rochow, *Der Vorwurf des Heidentums als Mittel der innenpolitischen Polemik in Byzanz*, in *Paganism in the Later Roman Empire and in Byzantium*, ed. M. Salamon, Crakow 1991, 133–156.

138 On the problematic aspects of concepts like "Christianization" and "pagan survivals" cf. R. Markus, *The end of ancient Christianity* (n.34), 8–12.

139 W. Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City*, Oxford 2001, 260–269.

140 Cf. E. Soler, *Le Sacré et le salut* (n.40), 240: "Beaucoup d'Antiochiens n'avaient pas une mais plusieurs religions et, sans les confondre, sans démarche à proprement parler syncrétiste, ils participaient à leurs fêtes, dans le but d'avoir plus de moyens et de chances d'atteindre ce à quoi ils aspiraient par-dessus tout, le salut". Soler refers to the 4th century, but his assessment may well still valid, if to a lesser extent, for the sixth century.

141 See *Encyclopaedia of Islam* VIII, 145–48, s.v. Nusayriyya; also M. Moosa, *Extremist Shiites, the Ghulat Sects*, Syracuse – New York 1988, 255–431. They have a trinity of Mohammed, Ali and Salman al Farisi. They celebrate Christmas, and have a communion service. Ali, the divinity, is closely linked to the sun. Before the fall, mankind were points of light contemplating the sun. Eventually, after repeated metempsychosis, they will return to their original condition.

10 Conclusion

Momigliano entitled his volume *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity*. If we look exclusively at the two religious systems, the traditional cults of the Greeks and Romans on the one hand, and Christianity on the other, there was indeed a conflict, a conflict from which Christianity emerged triumphant. But if we look at the interaction of the people involved, that is the Christians and the pagans themselves, it becomes clear that the word conflict does not describe the situation adequately.¹⁴² As far as we can see, Antiochene society was not divided into conflicting groups, split on the basis of conflicting religious allegiances. We get the impression that many aspects of civic life continued unaffected by religious differences. At Antioch in the fourth century, and probably more widely in the ruling classes of the empire, relations between Christians and pagans appear to have been mostly, though not always, good. Nevertheless this impression must be qualified. The competition between the religions was certainly not played out on a level playing field. The centuries following the conversion of Constantine saw steadily growing pressure by bishops and government on sectarian Christians, Pagans and Jews. There were occasions of violent conflict, riots, destruction of temples, mutilation of images, and trumped up prosecutions, and eventually forced conversions. Since our literary sources only provide a very incomplete picture, episodes of violence were probably more common than we would conclude from the surviving evidence. Violence was however episodic, not continuous, and the exception rather than the rule.¹⁴³ The reason for this was that the balance of power was very one-sided. Pagans had to be extremely careful. There is plenty of evidence, from our own times and throughout history, that legal discrimination against a religious group, verbal abuse in legislation and sermons, and the threat, and from time to time the reality, of interference with religious practices, produces resentment and hostility. But as the bulk of our evidence is Christian and much of it ecclesiastical, it does not allow us to reconstruct in full the reaction of remaining pagans to the discrimination against their cults and the sustained promotion of Christianity in the Christian empire. It of course also tells us very little about what the ordinary Christian thought about his pagan neighbours.

142 For the Roman view see the paper of R. Lizzi Testa, in Peter Brown and Rita Lizzi Testa (eds), *Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire, the Breaking of a Dialogue*, Zürich / Berlin: Lit 2011, 467–492.

143 See M.R. Salzman, *Pagan-Christian religious violence*, in *Violence in Late Antiquity, Perception and Practices*, ed. H.A. Drake, Aldershot 2006, 266–296.

As its title indicates, *The Pagans and Christians* of 2011 from its famous predecessor of 1958 in that its focus is on dialogue rather than conflict. I have found little or no evidence from Antioch¹⁴⁴ of direct dialogue between Christian leaders and representative pagans on the subject of their differing religious views. There could be no real dialogue between them, because they did not recognize each other's claims. However in order to win support, the religious contenders had to adapt to their cultural environment. The emperor Julian thought that to revive paganism he would have to introduce elements of organization and social work obviously derived from Christianity.¹⁴⁵ As Christianity was the party of change, its leaders had to clarify the Christian position towards the cultural heritage. We can observe the creation of a calendar of Christian festivals to replace the pagan calendar. Malalas shows us how Christian writers tried to reconcile the prehistory of classical mythology with the narrative of the Bible. He also cites Hermetic and "Orphic" writings, that is pagan texts, in support of Christian doctrine.¹⁴⁶ Chrysostom recommends the morality of the ascetic movement by presenting this as a philosophy which realizes the ethical objectives of secular philosophy far more effectively than classical philosophy had ever been able to do.¹⁴⁷

This paper has traced the Christianisation of Antioch. But once again it must be remembered that our evidence has important gaps. We have abundant information about what John Chrysostom and Theodoret and their contemporary fathers of the Church thought was required for an individual to be a Christian. We know that some aspects of their teaching, for instance the call to stay away from the public spectacles, were widely disregarded. But we really don't know what the "ordinary" Christian thought was essential in the way of Christian observance. Indeed we cannot even know what proportion of the people whom Chrysostom included in his estimate of the Christian population of Antioch would have defined themselves as Christians.

As far as the politics of religion are concerned Julian's Antioch was probably, the Antioch of Chrysostom certainly, a Christian city. Pagans continued to exist, but our sources tell us very little of them.¹⁴⁸ So we have little information about

144 For a wider view of dialogue see M. Kahlos, *Debate and Dialogue* (n.67), especially 62–83.

145 *Epp.* 16, 20 & *Fragment of a Letter to a Priest*.

146 Theodoret too argued for Christian truth from Hellenic philosophy, see above n. 89.

147 Most fully in *Adversus oppugnatores vitae monasticae*, in PG 57, 519–86, tr. by D.G. Hunter, *A Comparison between a King and a Monk & Against the Opponents of the Monastic Life*, Lewiston – Queenstown – Lampeter 1988.

148 Beatrice Caseau, 'The fate of rural temples,' in W. Bowden, L. Lavan, C. Machado, *Recent Research on the Late Antique Countryside*, Leiden/Boston: Brill 2004, 105–144.

the nature and extent of surviving pagan beliefs and practices. The Alawites (Nusayri) of contemporary Syria, who are actually today the most important political grouping in the country, do however provide a suggestive analogy, though only an analogy.¹⁴⁹ Islam has been the dominant religion in Syria for more than a millennium. Yet the Alawites adhere to a form of Islam which includes important elements derived from Christianity, from the mythology of Late Antique Gnosticism, and also from an ancient sun cult.

149 Analogy, not continuity. The similarities seem to be with the ancient cults of Harran in Mesopotamia, not with any specifically Antiochene cult, see M. Moosa, *Extremist Shiites, the Ghula Sects* (n.141), 339–341.

From Antioch to Piazza Armerina and Back Again*

The American expedition excavating Antioch in the 1930s found a very large number of mosaics. They are mainly from Daphne, the small resort settlement, famous for its springs and its temple of Apollo, where wealthy inhabitants of Antioch spent the hot summer months. The mosaics come from large houses, and they cover the whole period from the first to the sixth century A.D. They have been published in two large and detailed volumes by Doro Levi.¹ One would expect so large amount of material to provide historians with a rich source of information about the lives of the owners of the houses. In fact they have proved less informative than one might have expected. This is partly a consequence of the way in which they were found. Sometimes practically nothing is known about the houses of which a mosaic once formed part. A significant number can be assigned a precise location in a particular house. But none of the mosaics was discovered in the context of a systematic excavation of the house.² Moreover none of the houses has provided a building inscription, so that we are without any of the information about the owner which such an inscription might have provided.

As the great majority of the mosaics were found at Daphne and not in the city itself, it is problematic how much they tell us about the Antiochene elite. If, as is likely, some of the mansions were the summer villas of leading citizens of the great city, we cannot be sure that the decorations of their summer homes expressed the full range of their owners' interests and activities. If we knew the city residences we might get a rather different impression of the

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- 1 Levi D. (1947), *Antioch Mosaic Pavements*, 2 vol., Princeton University Press, Princeton. Volume I gives detail, unfortunately often inadequate, of the archaeological context in which each mosaic was found, the dating evidence, and a comprehensive history of its iconography. Volume II illustrates each mosaic. Cimok F. (2000), *Antioch Mosaics, a Corpus*, Turizm Yayınları, Istanbul, has coloured photographs of the mosaics which are of higher quality than those in Levi, but Levi's commentary remains indispensable.
- 2 Dobbins J.J. (2000), "The Houses of Antioch," in Kondoleon C. (ed.), *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City*, Worcester Art Museum and Princeton University Press, Worcester (Mass.) / Princeton, pp. 51–61; Stillwell R. (1961), "Houses of Antioch," *DOP* 15, pp. 45–57.

owners.³ Conceivably the floors of their city residences illustrated the owner's munificence and public spirit, which the houses at Daphne certainly do not. But of course we do not know.

Mosaics never illustrate more than a very limited area of life. Mosaic artists and their patrons did not choose their subjects for illustration freely from the whole range of human activities, but restricted themselves to certain subjects and themes that had traditionally been thought appropriate for representation on a mosaic floor, and for the treatment of which prototypes existed. Besides, decorated floors are only one element in the decoration of a classical house. Walls and ceilings were decorated too, usually with paintings as at Pompeii and Herculaneum. However these have perished almost entirely, at Daphne, as indeed on most sites everywhere. The range of themes at Daphne is more limited than for instance in North Africa. Scenes of every day life are very rarely represented at Antioch.⁴ So the mosaics do not tell us very much about what the owners did. What they tell us is what images he or she liked to see around them in their daily lives, and what interests they chose to parade before their visitors. In other words the mosaics tell us something about the culture of the owners of the house. Up to a point they enable us to compare the culture of the well to do at Daphne in Syria with that of similar people elsewhere, in North Africa for instance, or as in this paper in Sicily. Moreover change over time in the subjects depicted provides evidence of cultural change, and of the influences that brought it about.⁵

Well into the fourth century episodes from Greek mythology predominate.⁶ Classical Greek authors used mythology to express and discuss a wide range

3 A number of city mansions have been excavated at Apamea (Balty J. [1984]), "Notes sur l'habitat romain, byzantin et arabe d'Apamée," in *ead.* [ed.], *Apamée de Syrie, bilan des recherches archéologiques 1973-79* (Actes du Colloque de Bruxelles 1980), Centre belge de recherches archéologiques à Apamée de Syrie, Bruxelles, pp. 471-501. For comparison: Lassus J. (1984), "Sur les maisons d'Antioche," *ibid.*, pp. 361-72. The mansions at Apamea have produced far fewer mosaics than the houses at Daphne, though some very interesting ones: see Balty J. (1995). *Mosaïques antiques du Proche-Orient, Chronologie, Iconographie, Interprétation*, (Centre de Recherches d'Histoire Ancienne, 140) Les Belles Lettres, Paris, pp. 177-215, 299-305. Some of the houses at Apamea are very much larger than the houses at Daphne. It may be that none of the known Daphne houses belonged to leading decurions or *honorati* of Antioch.

4 The scenes of pastoral life from the Constantinian villa (Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* II, pl. 59) are not comparable to the African representations of estate activities.

5 See below.

6 This is by no means universal, even in the East. For instance the mosaics of Aphrodisias in Caria are mostly composed of abstract geometrical patterns. See Campbell Sh. (1991),

of themes, and the Antioch mosaics are very evocative of literature. However mythology provided the material not only for Greek literature, but also for the very much more widely popular mime and pantomime.⁷ So while mythological pavements might possibly evoke scenes from Homer or Euripides or Menander,⁸ and might therefore stimulate literary discussion among dinner guests,⁹ they would also remind the diners of public performances of mime or pantomime, performances that might also be offered to guests at a private symposium by the very wealthy.¹⁰ The mosaics present episodes from many stories, but the figure that is represented most often is the god Dionysus, and while some people have interpreted some of the mosaics as representations of Dionysus the saviour god of the Dionysian mysteries,¹¹ he is always, and at a more obviously level, the giver of wine and patron of drink.¹² A second large group of mosaics illustrates mythological love affairs and related themes like

The Mosaics of Aphrodisias in Caria, (Subsidia Mediaevalia, 18) Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval studies, Toronto. On the other hand the mosaics of Zeugma on the Euphrates seem to have been mainly mythological. See Önal M. (2003), *Mosaics of Zeugma*, Turizm Yayınları, Istanbul.

- 7 Libanius *Or.* LIV, translated in Molloy M. (1996), *Libanius and the Dancers*, (Altertumswissenschaftliche Texte und Studien, 31) Olms-Weidmann, Hildesheim and Zürich; see also Haubold J. and Miles R. (2004), "Communitality and Theatre in Libanius *Or.* LIV," in Sandwell I. and Huskinson J. (eds.), *Culture and Society in Later Roman Antioch*, Oxbow Books, Oxford, pp. 24–34.
- 8 Weitzmann K. (1941), "Illustrations of Euripides and Homer in the Mosaics of Antioch," in Stillwell R. (ed.), *Antioch on the Orontes* III, Princeton University Press, Princeton, pp. 233–247. Friend A.M. (1941), "Menander and Glycera in the Mosaics of Antioch," in Stillwell (ed.), *Antioch* III, pp. 248–251.
- 9 Dinner discussion: Braund D. and Wilkins J. (2000), *Athenaeus and his World*, University of Exeter Press, Exeter. Idealised convivial discussions at Rome (5th cent.): Macrobius, *Saturnalia*. Pre-dinner activities in Gaul: Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.* 2.9.4–5; at dinner: *ibid.*, 6.
- 10 Huskinson J. (2002–2003), "Theatre. Performance and Theatricality in some Mosaic Pavements at Antioch," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 46, pp. 131–161.
- 11 Kondoleon C. (1995), *Domestic and Divine: Roman Mosaics in the House of Dionysus*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca. Geyer A. (1977), *Das Problem des Realitätsbezuges in der dionysischen Bildkunst der Kaiserzeit*, (Beiträge zur Archaeologie, 10) K. Triltsch, Würzburg.
- 12 E.g. House of drunken Dionysus: Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* II, pl. 7b; House of Bacchic thiasus: *ibid.*, pl. 7c; House of triumph of Dionysus: *ibid.*, pl. 16a–c; House of Dionysus and Ariadne: *ibid.*, pls. 28–9; House of drinking contest: *ibid.*, pl. 30b; House of drunk Dionysus: *ibid.*, pl. 51; Constantinian villa, Bacchic thiasus: *ibid.*, pl. 58; Yakto complex, Hermes carrying the baby Dionysus: *ibid.*, pl. 55.b.

the beauty competition judged by Paris with such disastrous results for Troy.¹³ War and single combat between heroes figure largely in Greek mythology, but are largely absent from the mosaics.¹⁴ A theme that recurs repeatedly is that of the four seasons. The attributes of these abstract ladies show that they are there because they represent the annual cycle of germination, growth and harvest on which humanity, like all forms of life, depend for food.¹⁵ So the predominant themes of antiochene mosaics evoke wine, women, and food, themes altogether appropriate for the decoration of a dining room, and it is of course in dining-rooms, (*triclinia*), that many of the most striking mosaics are found.¹⁶

Another theme frequently represented on mosaics is water:¹⁷ springs, rivers,¹⁸ and the sea with an abundance of fishes.¹⁹ Water is not only represented as part of a landscape or a seascape, but also personified as Poseidon and Thetis and the nymphs of the sea, and by personifications of rivers with

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- 13 Judgement of Paris: Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* II, pl. 1b; Aphrodite and Adonis: *ibid.*, pl. 2a; Polyphemus and Galatea: *ibid.*, pl. 3b; Briseis' farewell: *ibid.*, pl. 8a; Meleager and Atalanta: *ibid.*, pl. 11a; Phaedra: *ibid.*, pl. 11b; Adonis' farewell: *ibid.*, pl. 12b; Abandoned Ariadne: *ibid.*, pl. 15c; Eros and Psyche: *ibid.*, pl. 31b; Europa and the bull: *ibid.*, pl. 35b; The boat of the souls. Eros propelled by swimming Psychai: *ibid.*, pl. 37b; Apollo and Daphne: *ibid.*, pl. 47a–b.
 - 14 But see the amazonomachy: *ibid.*, pl. 69; centaurs and Lapiths: *ibid.*, pl. 25.c–d.
 - 15 Although there is a mosaic of a buffet supper (*ibid.*, pl. 24a; 152a–b, 153a), the straightforward representation of food, ie the genre of still-life, which often decorates dining rooms in western Europe, is uncommon on the mosaics. Seasons: Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* II, pl. 13b–c; pl. 45b; 50d; pl. 54–5; pl. 32a–d. Related themes: The calendar: *ibid.*, pl. 5b; Aion, Past, Present and Future: *ibid.*, pl. 43.c–d.; Earth and the seasons: *ibid.*, pl. 81; Earth and crops: *ibid.*, pl. 62b; Land, fruit, harvest and wine: *ibid.*, pl. 42a and b; Bath E: Earth, Egypt and corn-land (*Aroura*): *ibid.*, pl. 165.
 - 16 Dunbabin K.M.D. (1996), "Convivial Spaces: Dining and Entertainment in the Roman villa," *JRA* 9, pp. 66–80; *ead.* (1991), "Triclinium and Stibadium," in Slater W.J. (ed.), *Dining in a Classical Context*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, pp. 121–148.
 - 17 Kondoleon C. (2000), "Mosaics of Antioch," in Kondoleon (ed.), *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City*, pp. 63–77, esp. pp. 72–74 & pl. 5–6 and 152–53 & pl. 39 on the House of the Boat of the Psyches, Oceanus and Thetis.
 - 18 House of the porticoes: Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* II, pl. 18.a–d; House of the boat of Psychai: Pegasus and the nymphs: *ibid.*, pl. 36b; erotes riding on fishes, *ibid.*, pl. 41 a–e; fishermen and fish: pl. 44a; House of Menander: Ladon and Psalis, two river gods: pl. 46c.
 - 19 House of the calendar: Oceanus and Thetis: Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* II, pl. 6a and b; House of triumph of Dionysus, sea thiasus: *ibid.*, pl. 16d; House of drinking contest: fantasy of erotes riding on fishes: *ibid.*, pl. 31.c; House of Menander. Oceanus and Thetis: pl. 47.c; Bath F, sea fantasies: pl. 62 a–c; Bath E, sea nymphs: pl. 63 a–b; Yakto complex, mosaic of Thetis: pl. 75, 76a.

evocations of myth. It is not surprising that the inhabitants of these hot and dry Mediterranean lands liked to look at water, or at least representations of water. When classical poets wanted to evoke a pleasant place, they typically described a shady spot with rocks and grass and a bubbling spring. At Daphne the dining rooms themselves were often designed to look out onto a courtyard with running water.²⁰

Gods of one kind or another are frequently represented on mosaics, particularly on mosaics from the second to the late third and early fourth centuries. But in most cases it is difficult to say how far these representations are 'religious', at least in the way representations of sacred themes are 'religious' in Christian art. The images of polytheistic deities were after all regularly used both in literature and in visual art symbolically to symbolise the aspect of the world over which a particular deity was sovereign, Poseidon the sea, Dionysus wine, Venus love and so on. As such they are part of the evocation of the good life of sociability. On the other hands the fact that the symbolic figure was one of their gods must have affected the way people responded to these images in some way. But if it is unlikely that an image decorating a floor was ever intended to evoke worship, it does however look as if some floor mosaics were designed to express deeper religious or philosophical ideas. Unusual and complicated combinations of allegorical abstractions, unusual versions of familiar legends, some seemingly solemn depiction of ritual, challenge the viewer to look for a deeper meaning. Scholars have certainly taken up the challenge.²¹ But the challenging images are very much a minority. The mosaics continue to communicate principally through the discourse of Greek myth well into the fourth century. But myths cease to be depicted around the last quarter of the century.

Because the number of themes thought appropriate for floor mosaics was so limited, and because we have so few inscriptions, we know scarcely anything about the individuals and families that lived in these prosperous houses. We cannot associate the houses with any of the numerous Antiochenes known to us from the writings of Libanius.²² We know nothing about their family

20 Dobbins, "The Houses of Antioch," pp. 51–61.

21 At Daphne an Isiac initiation: Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* 1, pp. 163–166, II, pl. 33. Elsewhere: Balty J. (1995), "Un programme philosophique sous la cathédrale d'Apamée, l'ensemble néo-platonicien de l'empereur Julien," in *ead.*, *Mosaïques Antiques du Proche-Orient*, pp. 265–273; "Les thérapénides d'Apamée," *ibid.*, pp. 299–305. Agosti G. (2004), "Due note sulla convenienza di Omero," in Marcone A. (ed.), *Società e Cultura in Età Tardoantica*, (Studi Udinese sul Mondo Antico, 1) Le Monnier università, Grassina, pp. 38–57.

22 The only mosaic that refers to a known historical individual is the topographical border of the Megalopsychia mosaic, which labels a house at Daphne as that of Ardaburius, the *magister militum per Orientem* A.D. 453–66.

histories, or about the ways they earned their living. The economic conditions of Antiquity make it likely that most of them were landowners. But we don't find any mosaics that illustrate life and work on a great estate of the kind we find in North African.²³ This is remarkable, because in Africa too the depictions of life on an estate have been found not in rural villas, but in town houses, like the houses at Daphne. We know nothing of their political activities, or their relations to the Roman state, or indeed to the city of Antioch. We know that public games were a prominent feature of the city. They were enormously popular, and the leading citizens were still competing to out-do each other in their expenditure on chariot racing, theatricals and wild-beast chases in the fourth century.²⁴ But this munificence is not commemorated on domestic mosaic floors.²⁵

There is one possible exception to this: the early 4th century hunt mosaic in the Constantinian villa. This is not a straightforward realistic representation of hunting in Syria, but a sophisticated version of an artistic theme with a long history in Hellenistic art.²⁶ The particular development of the 'topos' found in the Constantinian villa at Antioch appears to have originated in Africa, where it was applied to representations of hunting by the local landowners. But in the Constantinian villa the hunted animals include beasts of the amphitheatre, and it may well be that the mosaic is an indirect evocation of the wild-beast chases in the city's arena.²⁷ The theme recurs in the later fifth century.²⁸ But for the earlier period it is unique. If the houses at Daphne belonged to leading citizens of Antioch, their owners did not generally think it necessary to display their public-spirited giving to visitors. In this respect they differed from the owners of similar town houses in Africa. Depictions of life on the estate have been found in African town houses that are otherwise comparable to the villas at Daphne, but at Daphne such depictions of rural life are not found. Is the

23 See Fantar M.H. *et alii* (1994), *La Mosaïque en Tunisie*, CNRS éditions—Éditions de la Méditerranée, Paris/Tunis, pp. 126–52. Blanchard-Lemée M. *et alii* (1996), *Roman Mosaics from North Africa: Floor Mosaics from Tunisia*, British Museum Press, London/New York.

24 In the early empire they spent money on gladiators and athletic competitions as well.

25 This was not because there did not exist any prototypes for the depiction of games: Newby Z. (2002), "Athletics on mosaics from Rome and Ostia," *PBSR* 70, pp. 177–203. Bergmann B. and Kondoleon C. (eds.) (1999), *The Art of Roman Spectacle*, Yale University Press, New Haven and National Gallery of Art, Washington; Khanoussi M. (1991), "Les spectacles des jeux athétiques et de pugilat dans l'Afrique romaine," *RM* 98, pp. 315–322.

26 Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements*, pp. 226–56.

27 See the important Lavin I. (1963), "The Hunting Mosaics at Antioch and their Sources," *DOP* 17, pp. 179–286.

28 See below.

difference due to the fact that the owners of the houses at Daphne were more urbanized, and less interested in their landed properties? Or is the explanation that the owners of Daphne, though wealthy, were nothing like as rich as the owners of the African houses, and did not own properties of the kind illustrated on the African mosaics? It could also be that the villas that have been excavated just happen not to include any of the villas belonging to the wealthiest inhabitants, that is, to individuals wealthy enough to present chariot races or wild-beast chases to the people of Antioch.

Piazza Armerina

But the absence of pictures of the public shows in the houses at Daphne is in the strongest contrast to their prominence in the villa at Piazza Armerina. Now the villa at Piazza Armerina is very different indeed from the houses at Daphne in a great many respects. For one, it is situated not in a town but in the country, deep in central Sicily. Then the villa is vastly larger, and more magnificent. The word 'aristocratic' has been applied both to the houses at Daphne and to the villa at Piazza Armerina, but the villa obviously represents a very much more elevated and powerful level of aristocracy than the houses. However the villa at Piazza Armerina does share with the houses at Daphne an exceptional density of mosaics. As in some of the houses at Daphne, a high proportion of its rooms and corridors have mosaic floors. But while the mosaics at Daphne are concerned with dining and literature and conversation, the largest and most striking mosaics at Piazza Armerina are about the hunting and the public games.

A two-apsed corridor in the baths, which is sometimes described as a palaestra, is filled with a large depiction of a chariot race in the Circus Maximus at Rome, and illustrates a variety of incidents from the beginning to the end of the race. In room 23, a relatively minor reception room, which is entered from the peristyle, there is an impressive depiction of a wild beast hunt. As was noted earlier, this is stylistically close to the hunt mosaic in the Constantinian villa at Antioch, but here the hunted animals are such as the owner of the villa might have hunted in Sicily.²⁹ Not so the wild animals being hunted on the huge mosaic that fills the great corridor with an apse at each end, which functions among other things as the vestibule to an exceptionally large apsed audience hall. The theme of this mosaic is not the actual sport of hunting, but a large-scale, almost military, operation designed to catch a wide variety of wild

29 See the important article of Lavin, "The Hunting Mosaics at Antioch."

animals, and to transport them overseas. The exercise is evidently taking place in Africa, and quite possibly in Asia as well. The destination overseas were so many animals from so diverse regions are destined must surely be the public games at Rome.

The villa has an exceptionally impressive dining complex. This is almost a separate building with a large horse-shoe shaped forecourt, leading up to a great triconch triclinium.³⁰ The latter is dominated by massive depictions of the feats of Hercules. In the central apse we see giants pierced by arrows of the hero, and dying. The centre of the triclinium is filled with more exploits of Hercules. There are the Nemean lion, and the Hydra, both slain by Hercules, as well as the triple bodied Cerberus captured by him, and the savage horses of Diomedes which Hercules captured and tamed. In the left-hand conch Hercules is shown being crowned by a god, surely Jupiter. These mosaics have no parallels in Africa or elsewhere and have given rise to much scholarly debate.³¹ Plausible arguments have been produced that Hercules here stands for the tetrarch Maximinus, of whom we know that he had adopted Hercules as his divine patron and taken the name of Herculus.³² This is now thought unlikely.³³ But in that case we must ask: what is Hercules doing here? An alternative explanation is needed. Now the dominant impression left by these images is that of violence. There is great visual emphasis on the savagery of the victims. I would therefore suggest that Hercules is represented in the first place as a hunter and gladiator, and that what we see in the triclinium at Piazza Armerinum is the slaughter of the Roman amphitheatre allegorized into mythology. If that is right, the triclinium shows figuratively the destiny of animals like those whose capture is depicted in the great corridor. The myth of Hercules was the object of a wide range of allegorical interpretations, some

30 Lavin I. (1962), "The House of the Lord, Aspects of the Role of Palace Triclinia in the Architecture of Late Antiquity," *The Art Bulletin* 44, pp. 1–27; Morvillez E. (1995), "Les salles de réception triconques dans l'architecture domestique de l'Antiquité Tardive," *Histoire de l'Art* 31, pp. 15–26.

31 Carandini A., Ricci A., and De Vos M. (1982), *Filosophiana, The Villa of Piazza Armerina, the Image of a Roman Aristocrat in the Time of Constantine*, 2 vol., S.F. Flaccovio, Palermo, illustrates all the mosaics and very fragmentary frescoes, and has a fairly detailed description of the whole villa.

32 L'Orange H.P. (1956), "Il palazzo di Massimiano Ercoleo di Piazza Armerina," in *Studi in onore di Aristide Calderini e Roberto Paribeni* III, Ceschina, Milan, pp. 593–600. Another attribution: Kahler H. (1969), "Die Villa des Maxentius bei Piazza Armerina," *Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia* 4, pp. 41–49.

33 Wilson R.J.A. (1983), *Piazza Armerina*, Granada, London/New York, pp. 87–90.

of which can certainly be applied to his representation here.³⁴ Nevertheless, the immediate effect of these images is an evocation of scenes in the amphitheatre. On second thought however, the viewer might decide that Hercules stands for the emperor pacifying the world.

Representations of the Roman Games are not restricted to the public spaces of the villa. In what seems to be a private suite to the right of the great central basilica there is a charming parody of a hunting scene like the wild beast hunt represented on the floor of room 23. In the parody children perform as hunters, and the role of hunted beast, boar or leopard, is played by a hare. Another room in the same suite depicts a mock chariot race in the Circus Maximus,³⁵ with children dressed in the colours of the Roman circus factions driving chariots drawn by birds. In what looks like a bedroom there is a representation of combat between Pan and Eros (lust v. love?) with bags of coins awaiting the winner, as they might the successful hunter in a wild beast show.³⁶

There are other villas of comparable size both in Sicily and elsewhere in the Empire.³⁷ But they are few and their owners must have been men of quite exceptional wealth. This means that they were either very high officials who had become wealthy in office, or descendants of a long line such men, that is men of senatorial families. It is likely that the owner of the villa at Piazza Armerina, whoever he was, was a senator, and that the mosaics commemorate games that he had organized and largely financed, when he held offices as prefect of the city, or more likely as consul, at Rome. But if he was in fact a Roman senator, the question arises why he built so large, and splendid a mansion in Sicily. The implication must be that Sicily was his principal home. The size of the triclinium, and the number of smaller reception rooms, and the splendid baths show that he intended to entertain on a large scale. There were of course

34 E.g. Settis S. (1975), "Per l'interpretazione di Piazza Armerina," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome (Antiquité)* 87, pp. 873–994.

35 The obelisk in the middle of the *spina* seems to be the same as that on the representation of the chariot race in the apsed corridor of the baths.

36 E.g. on the Magerius mosaic of Smirat in North Africa illustrated Fantar, *La Mosaïque en Tunisie*, pp. 159–60.

37 Some plans in Wilson, *Piazza Armerina*, p. 76 and 79. Ellis S. (2000), *Roman Housing*, Duckworth, London, pp. 42–6 (From Hispania: Torre de Palmas (Portugal), Cuevas de Soria, Olmeda). Sfameni C. (2004), "Residential Villas in Late Antique Italy," in Bowden W., Lavan L., Machado C. (eds.), *Recent Research on the Late Antique Countryside*, E.J. Brill, Leiden/Boston, pp. 335–375, at 336–347 (Piazza Armerina, Tellaro. Patti Marina, Desenzano).

numerous senatorial families who had their principal residence in Sicily, and who no doubt enjoyed an active social life.³⁸ That in addition to the triconch dining complex, the villa had a very large basilica, whose 440 m² of floor was covered not with mosaics but with slabs of marble of different colours, suggests that the owner not only entertained his peers, but also had very large number of clients.³⁹ A plausible case has been argued that the owner was the very distinguished senator L. Aradius Valerius Proculus Populonium who was prefect of Rome twice (ad 337–38, 351–52), and achieved the consulate in ad 340.⁴⁰ Whether that is right or not, the owner of the villa at Piazza Armerina would seem to have been a very powerful figure in central Sicily.

The lack of building activity in the Sicilian cities⁴¹ compared with the size and splendour of the villas does indeed suggest that power and wealth on that island had passed to a considerable extent to the great landowners. The same may well have been the case in other regions, for instance Spain, where we also find super-villas,⁴² but not in Syria. There, the rural settlement of Late Antiquity is characterized by large and expanding villages.⁴³ Syria has produced few, if any, large rural villas like that of Piazza Armerina.

38 Other evidence: Wilson, *Piazza Armerina*, pp. 217–220, Cracco Ruggini L. (1997–1998), “La Sicilia Tardoantica e l’Oriente Mediterraneo,” *Kokkalos* 43–44, pp. 243–69.

39 It is usually thought that the basilica served as an audience chamber where clients offered their patron their morning *salutatio*, see Ellis, *Roman Housing*, pp. 170–173. But Polci B. (2003), “Aspects of the Transformation of the Roman *domus*,” in Lavan L., Bowden W. (eds.), *Theory and Practice in Late Antique Archaeology*, E.J. Brill, Leiden/ Boston, pp. 79–109, esp. 86–87, shows where there were two great reception rooms guests might be entertained in one before dinner, and dine in the other.

40 Carandini *et alii*, *Filosofiana*, pp. 31–34. His biography: *PLRE* 1, pp. 747–749. But this man’s family owned a *domus* on the Mons Caelius at Rome. Wilson, *Piazza Armerina*, p. 218 suggests Fabius Titianus 6, consul 337, *PUR* 339–41 and 350–51, some time consular of Sicily. See *PLRE* 1, pp. 918–919. Uncertainty remains.

41 Wilson, *Piazza Armerina*, pp. 187–188.

42 E.g. Arce J. (1997), “Emperadores, palacios y villae (A propósito de la villa romana de Cercadilla, Córdoba),” *Ant Tard.* 5, pp. 293–302.

43 Tate G. (1992), *Les campagnes de la Syrie du Nord: un exemple d’expansion démographique et économique à la fin de l’Antiquité*, (BAH 133) Librairie orientale Paul Geuthner, Paris; Cassana J. (2004), “The Archaeological Landscape of Late Roman Antioch,” in Sandwell I. and Huskinson J. (eds.), *Culture and Society in Later Roman Antioch*, Oxbow Books, Oxford, pp. 102–125. Sodini J.-P. (1997), “Habitat de l’Antiquité tardive (2).” *Topoi* 7, pp. 435–575, relevant 484–491.

Back to Antioch

In the last quarter of the fourth century we can observe a change of style in the mosaics at Daphne and Antioch, as indeed at other places in Syria.⁴⁴ Representations of mythology become very rare and restricted to a very limited range of themes. Indeed the human figure largely disappears from mosaics, except in female abstractions like Ananeosis (Renewal), Ktisis (Creation), Apolauis (Enjoyment) and Megalopsychia (Greatness of Mind, Generosity),⁴⁵ or in hunting contexts, animals become more prominent. A late house has produced two hunt mosaics, the so-called Honolulu and Worcester Hunts. Another late house had a floor which is named the Dumbarton Oaks hunt, after its present location.⁴⁶ All three are in the tradition of the 4th century hunt mosaic in the Constantinian house, as indeed of the 'Small Hunt' at Piazza Armerina. The genre seems to have achieved popularity in Syria only at this late stage. The best known mosaic of the hunt mosaics was found in a complex from Yakto outside Antioch. It has a representation of the hunt that is stylistically closely related to that of the others, but in the centre of the panel there is a medallion containing a bust of an elegantly made up lady, who is labelled Megalopsychia.⁴⁷ The lady holds what look like coins in her hand, and a pot filled with the same round objects stands by her side. The whole panel is surrounded by a topographical border which has been interpreted as illustrating a walk first through Daphne, and then through part of Antioch. Much has been written about this mosaic.⁴⁸ The most probable interpretation of the greatness of mind personified in the portrait at the centre of the mosaic is the virtue of generosity, and in this particular context the generosity displayed by the individual presenting a wild beast hunt to his fellow citizens. If that is so, it conveys the same message as the hunt mosaics at Piazza Armerina.

It is just possible that we know the name of that generous owner. One building on the topographical border of the mosaic is the labeled 'the Bath

44 Balty, *Mosaïques antiques du Proche-Orient*, pp. 72–109. Donceel-Voûte P. (1994), "Le v^e siècle dans les mosaïques syriennes." in Darmon J.-P. and Rebourg A. (eds.), *La mosaïque gréco-romaine* IV, Association internationale pour l'étude de la mosaïque antique, Paris, pp. 205–210.

45 Downey G. (1938), "Personification of abstract ideas in the Antioch mosaics," *TAPhA* 69, pp. 349–363.

46 Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* II, pl. 86a.

47 Downey G. (1945), "The Pagan Virtue of Megalopsychia in Byzantine Syria," *TAPhA* 76, pp. 279–86.

48 Downey G. (1961), *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, pp. 659–664.

(*pribaton*) of Ardaburius'. Now Ardaburius was *magister militum per Orientem* with headquarters at Antioch from 453–466. Did the general volunteer to undertake the liturgy of the Syriarch whose duty it was to present a wild beast chase to the people of Antioch?⁴⁹ Of course we do not know. But if Ardaburius did indeed present a wild beast chase to the people of Antioch in the 450s, this marks a stage in the decline of the authority of the civic council. For the general was not a decurion. He was a man of senatorial status—like the owner of Piazza Armerina—a *honoratus*, one of the group of notables⁵⁰ who were to take over running the cities of the East, when decurions ceased to be able to do so.⁵¹

The increased popularity of mosaic representations of wild beast chases in Syria in the later fifth century and after was not only, or even mainly, a consequence of the popularity of such spectacles in the amphitheatre. An important factor must have been the fact that the stories of mythology seem no longer to have been considered appropriate material for floor decoration. The gap left by the disappearance of mythological themes was partly filled by representations of animals, not only, or even mainly, of animals being hunted,⁵² but simply of tame⁵³ and wild animals⁵⁴ or of birds, or sometimes just the heads of animals set either against a plain or a patterned background,⁵⁵ and sometimes within the spirals of a vine scroll.⁵⁶ Animal designs were found above all on the floor

49 See note 22. The mosaic also names three other house-owners (Leontius, Heliades, Maiorinus). Nothing is known of the other three. So the naming of Ardaburius is not necessarily intended to hint that the munificence was his.

50 Laniado A. (2002), *Recherches sur les notables municipaux dans l'empire protobyzantin*, (Travaux et Mémoires: Monographies, 13) Association des Amis du Centre d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, Paris; Liebeschuetz W. (2001), *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 110–120.

51 At Antioch the functions of the Syriarch were transferred to the consular of Syria in 465, that is before Ardaburius had retired from his command. If he had volunteered for the Syriarchy, he was the last man to be able to do so (*CJ* 1.36.1.)

52 Worcester Hunt: Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* 11, pls. 170 and 171–175; Honolulu Hunt: Kondoleon, *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City*, p. 158, fig. 43.

53 Campbell Sh. (1995), "The Peaceful Kingdom," in Ling R. (ed.), *Fifth Colloquium on Ancient Mosaics*, *JRA* Supplement 9, pp. 125–134.

54 *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* 11, Hall of Philia: pl. 72 a–d. House of Phoenix: beribboned lion: pl. 70.c.

55 Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* 11, pls. 178 and 180 (bird patterns); 182 and 183 (fish); Striding lion at centre of pattern of animals and birds in squares: *ibid.*, pl. 74a.

56 House of the Bird-Rinceaux: *ibid.*, pl. 181d.

of churches,⁵⁷ where they might be thought to represent the fulfilment of the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah: "Then the wolf shall live with the sheep, and the leopard lie down with the kid, the calf and the young lion shall grow up together,"⁵⁸ or the condition of life on earth before the fall.⁵⁹

Other types of ornament became popular as the mythological mosaic went out of favour in the last quarter of the fourth century. The Theodosian age produced some very elaborate geometric designs.⁶⁰ From the fifth century we have many carpet-like designs with a repetitive flour or bird pattern on a white background.⁶¹ One type of this has a medallion containing a female bust at its centre, with the bust representing an abstraction. Among these are Celebration (*Epicosmesis*),⁶² Health (*Soteria*), Enjoyment (*Apolausis*),⁶³ each of whom might be said to represent an aspect of good and healthy living, while Renewal (*Ananeosis*),⁶⁴ Creation (*Ktisis*),⁶⁵ The Earth (*Ge*) together with medallions of the four seasons⁶⁶ seem to represent the natural order which is a necessary condition for good living, indeed for living of any kind. The message conveyed by the abstraction is therefore not so very different from that most often conveyed in previous centuries by scenes from mythology. But the transformation of the imagery conveying the message is nevertheless very striking.

How is the change to be explained? One explanation would be a simple change of fashion. Indeed there certainly was such a change. Lavin observed that in the course of the second and third centuries there developed in Africa a mosaic style which was designed to provide a repetitive, carpet-like, pattern for the whole floor, rather than to use the floor as surface on which to

57 E.g. the mosaic pavement of the church at Seleucia Pieria: Kondoleon, *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City*, pp. 218–221; Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* II, pls. 175 and 176.

58 Isaiah 11.6

59 John Chrysostom, *Homily* 4, 10–11 on *Genesis* 1.30 (green plants created as food for all animals).

60 Geometric mosaics: Balty, *Mosaïques antiques du Proche-Orient*, pp. 89–97. See also Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* I, pp. 405–06, 416–30, 434–36, 467–76 on the rainbow style. Examples: Kaoussie church: Levi, *ibid.*, II, pl. 114–115; Baths D: *ibid.*, pl. cxvi–cxvii; Baths of Apolausis: *ibid.*, pl. 121; 2 pavements from DH 27-H: *ibid.*, pl. 130 a and b.

61 E.g. House of Buffet Supper: Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* II, pl. 124 and 126; House of Beribboned Lion: *ibid.*, pl. 127; House of Green Carpet: *ibid.*, pl. 128; House of Phoenix: *ibid.*, pl. 134–135; Mosaic of beribboned Parrots: *ibid.*, pl. 137.

62 Cimok, *Antioch Mosaics*, p. 201.

63 *Ibid.*, pp. 235, 237.

64 *Ibid.*, p. 244.

65 *Ibid.*, p. 295.

66 *Ibid.*, pp. 277–80.

arrange pictorial representations of scenes with the illusion of three dimensional space.⁶⁷ It has been observed that many of the mosaic floors at Piazza Armerina are very close to African treatments of the same themes.⁶⁸ This style did not come to Antioch before the end of the fourth century, but it does make its appearance in the animal hunts and the carpet mosaics of the fifth and sixth centuries, though nothing that is known from Antioch is on the scale of the floors at Piazza Armerina, and the Antiochene designs are nothing like as elaborate. Indeed one gets the impression that there was less building at Daphne in the fifth and sixth centuries than there had been in the third and fourth centuries, and that what building there was in the fifth century, was on a less ambitious scale than in the fourth. But be that as it may, it is interesting that the change of style involving the abandonment of narrative, and of the representation of three dimensional space, and the adoption of more abstract designs in which figures are distributed on the floor to form a pattern, rather than to render their relation to each other in space, seems to have originated in the Latin West. It used to be thought that the retreat from naturalistic realism was due to an ever increasing influence of the East.⁶⁹ We can now see that this was not so. Some Persian elements can be observed in the fifth and sixth century mosaics at Antioch and Daphne.⁷⁰ But the basic mosaic technique and the designs of borders of mosaics in the eastern frontier region, at Edessa⁷¹ and in the palace of the Persian king Sapor at Bishapur, show that mosaic art came to Mesopotamia from the Empire, though it was modified in accordance with local needs and tastes.⁷²

It is also interesting that this change of fashion happened at about the same time as Libanius feared that training in Latin and Roman law might replace

67 Lavin, "Hunting Mosaics," esp. pp. 182–190; Dunbabin K.M.D. (1999), *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 110–114.

68 Dunbabin, *ibid.*, pp. 130–42.

69 The debate whether late Roman art was, or was not, oriental in origin was in part ideological. See for instance Elsner J. (2002), "The Birth of Late Antiquity: Riegl and Strzygowski in 1901," *Art History* 25.3, pp. 358–379.

70 On the striding lion, the border of paired ram's heads, the beribboned patterns: Gonosova A. (2000), "Exotic Taste, the Lure of Sassanian Persia," in Kondoleon, *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City*, pp. 130–138.

71 Colledge M. (1994), "Some Remarks on the Edessan Funerary Mosaics," in Darmon and Rebourg (eds.), *La mosaïque gréco-romaine* IV, pp. 189–92.

72 Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, pp. 171–76; Lozinski B.P. (1995), "The Phoenix Mosaic from Antioch, a New Interpretation," in Ling R. (ed.), *Fifth Colloquium on Ancient Mosaics*, *JRA* Supplement 9, pp. 135–42.

the traditional education in Greek literature and rhetoric.⁷³ Of course we know that upper class young men in the East continued to receive the traditional education for a long time yet, so that Libanius fears proved unnecessary. But the change in the way people now began to decorate their houses shows that his fears were not altogether groundless. Important cultural change was going on.

Libanius was particularly worried about Latin, Roman Law and shorthand, and the prestige and usefulness of these disciplines for young men looking for a career in the imperial service, where the number of career openings had greatly increased since an emperor and Latin based central administration resided permanently in the East, and indeed for many years at Antioch itself. The accession of the emperor Theodosius certainly brought a new wave of Westerners into the administration of the East. It may be that they brought with them elements of specifically western culture, such as western innovations in floor design. But a more important factor is likely to have been the Christianisation of the city—which was of course also hastened by the intermittent presence of a Christian court. There is evidence that by the time of the reign of Theodosius Antioch had a Christian majority, even if a considerable number of its citizens, including some members of the elite remained loyal to their traditional religion.⁷⁴ Relations between Christians and pagans seem to have been good, and the more or less intact survival of so many mosaic floors does not suggest that Antioch (or at least Daphne) ever saw a campaign to destroy mythological images.⁷⁵ It is also worth noting that very few Christian symbols are to be found on the domestic mosaics.⁷⁶ It is of course possible that biblical scenes were as a rule (there are exceptions) depicted on walls and ceilings and not on floors,⁷⁷ and have for that reason not been preserved.

73 *Or.* 2, 44–46 (AD 381); 62, 221–23 (c. AD 382); 43.4–5 (c. AD 386); 1.154 (AD 374), 214 (AD 383), 234 (AD 385).

74 Liebeschuetz W. (1972), *Antioch, City and Imperial Administration in the Later Empire*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, pp. 225–226; Sandwell I. (2004), “Christian Self-definition in the Fourth Century ad: John Chrysostom on Christianity, Imperial Rule and the City,” in Sandwell I. and Huskinson J. (eds.), *Culture and Society in Later Roman Antioch*, Oxbow Books, Oxford, pp. 35–58.

75 It is clear that existing mythological mosaics were not destroyed. There was no iconoclasm.

76 Paired wild and tame animals in the Hall of Philia possibly illustrate Isaiah 11.7 (Levi. *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* 1, pp. 317–19). Another mosaic, *ibid.*, pl. 71, from what may have been an inn, seems to echo the words of 1 Kings 16.4. That is not very much!

77 As on the cupola of the Centcelles villa, with its adjacent bands of a hunting scene and biblical scenes expressing a Christian hope of a life after death: Hauschild T., Arbeiter A. (1993), *La Villa romana de Centcelles*, Montserrat Mateu Taller Editorial, Barcelona. See

But however that may be, it does look as if an individual now decided to build himself a new house, or to redecorate an old one, he would generally chose not to have mythological motifs on the floors of his dining and his reception rooms.

The importance of this development should not be underestimated. It amounts to a down-grading of classical mythology, and the beginning of the development which eventually resulted in the Bible replacing Homer and classical literature as the guide of how to live. This was a slow evolution, which really only achieved completion in the second half of the 6th century. But it involved a profound transformation which must have affected all aspects of civic life. Laniado concludes an excellent book on the notables of the later part of Late Antiquity: "On constate en effet des transformations profondes dans les domaines de la religion, de l'urbanisme et de la culture en général . . . Mais c'est tout un monde qui change, non le rôle qu'y jouent la cité et ses notables."⁷⁸ To me that argument does not seem to be consistent. When the world is transformed, the role of the city and its notables must inevitably be transformed too.

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now Arce J. (2002), "Nuevas reflexiones sobre la iconografía de la cúpula de Centcelles," in Arce J. (ed.) *Centcelles, El Monumento Tardoromano*, L'Erma di Bretschneider, Rome, pp. 11–21, arguing that the monument is not the mausoleum of the emperor Constans, but could even have been the residence of a bishop. See also Warland R. (2002), "Die Kuppelmosaiken von Centcelles: spätantike Privatrepresentation," *ibid.*, pp. 21–35 who argues convincingly that two of the fragmentary figures in the third register represent women. To my mind the iconography as a whole is more appropriate for a mausoleum than for a triclinium. I would suggest that the four figures in the third register represented the owner and his wife, whose sarcophagi once stood somewhere under the dome.

78 Laniado, *Recherches sur les notables municipaux*, p. 254.

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Theodoret's *Graecarum affectionum curatio*: Defending Christianity in Christian Syria*

Introduction

This chapter is about what is perhaps the last of the series of Christian Apologies that were written to refute criticism and accusations made by pagans. It was composed at a time when Christianity was already the dominant religion in the Roman Empire by Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrrhus, a small Syrian city, situated on one of the main routes from the Mediterranean and the great city of Antioch to Mesopotamia. The *Curatio* was written early in Theodoret's career, surely before the first Council of Ephesus of 431, and perhaps even before he became a bishop in 423.¹ This means that it was written not long after Alaric had sacked Rome, and around the same time that Augustine wrote the final books of his *City of God*.²

Theodoret's Early Life and Education

Theodoret was born in Antioch in 393, evidently to well-to-do parents. He received an excellent Greek rhetorical education (just as John Chrysostom had received around thirty years earlier) and (again like Chrysostom) he acquired the ability to write very good classical Greek. Antioch was ostensibly a Greek city, and Greek was certainly the language used by its upper class in all public business, in fact in all business that has left written evidence. The writings of the most famous Antiochene authors, the pagan Libanius as well as the Christian John Chrysostom,³ certainly offer no hint that either ever

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1 Théodoret de Cyr, *Thérapeutique des Maladies Helléniques*, ed. and trans. by P. Canivet, S. Chr. 57, Paris, 1958, 28–31.

2 Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, London, 1967, 281, 378. *Civ.Dei* was begun in 413 and completed in 425.

3 But Ps. Martyrius 50 (485B) suggests that Chrysostom actually had good Latin.

used any language other than Greek. But the territory of Antioch contained a large population that was Syriac speaking, or at least bilingual, and in the neighbouring Mesopotamia, Aramaic (Syriac) was becoming the language of Christian theological literature. Theodoret's family was bilingual. His mother sought counsel from the hermit Macedonius, who did not speak Greek,⁴ and Theodoret himself was able to converse with monks who only spoke Syriac.⁵ From early youth Theodoret was very familiar with the hermits who lived in the hills in the neighbourhood of Antioch. He was blessed at different times by the hermits Macedonius, Peter, and Aphraates.⁶

The Impact of Asceticism

Theodoret was deeply impressed by the lives of extreme austerity chosen by the hermits and monks, even though they were mostly simple men without any advantages of birth and education. On reaching adolescence he wanted to become a monk himself, but his parents would not let him. He was, however, ordained as a lector, and as such would read the lesson in church.⁷ As soon as both parents had died, Theodoret, now twenty-three years old, sold his property and gave the proceeds to the poor.⁸ He then entered the monastery of Nicerta, seventy-five kilometers south of Antioch.⁹ Like Chrysostom, he spent seven years as a monk, and, once more like Chrysostom, he then abandoned the ascetic life to be ordained in rapid succession priest and bishop, for in 423 CE,¹⁰ at the age of thirty, he was consecrated Bishop of Cyrrhus.¹¹

4 Theodoret, *HR*. IX 5–8; XIII.16–17.

5 F. Millar, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus: A Syrian in Greek Dress?* in Hagit Amirav and Bas ter Haar Romeny (eds.), *From Rome to Constantinople: Studies in Honour of Averil Cameron*, Leuven, 2007, 105–25. Theodoret tells us that he had read the writings of Pope Leon the Great (*ep*. 113, ed. Zéma, 58), so like Chrysostom he may also have known some Latin. Perhaps both were intended to qualify for the imperial service— even if Theodoret's parents had promised that he would serve the church, and had him educated appropriately (*Ep*. 81, Zéma, 196).

6 Theodoret, *HR*. VIII, 15; IX, 4; XIII, 8.

7 *HR*, XII, 4 (1397B). So also Chrysostom at around this age (Palladius, *Dial*. 5, [PG. XLVII, 18]).

8 *Ep*. 113, ed. Zéma, 66.

9 P. Canivet and M.T. Canivet, "Sites chrétiennes d'Apamène," *Syria* 48 (1971): 299–303.

10 Theodoret wrote *Ep*. 81 of 448 CE in the twenty-fifth year of his episcopate, and *Ep*. 113 of 449 CE in the twenty-sixth year.

11 J. Abdul Massih, "Évaluation de l'état général du site archéologique de Cyrrhus–Nebi Houri," *Annales Archéologiques Syriennes* 49 (2006): 45–59.

The Curatio

As we have seen, it was in the 420s, either just before or not long after Theodoret had become a bishop, that he wrote the defence of Christianity entitled *Curatio affectionum Hellenarum*, or, to give it its second and more informative title, *The Truth of the Gospel Proved from Greek Philosophy*.¹² This is an Apology, which very much follows the conventions of the long tradition of Christian Apologetics.¹³ The genre had originated in the age of persecutions. The aim of earlier writers had been to persuade their pagan neighbours, and of course also the imperial authorities, that Christians did not constitute a danger to society, and at the same to keep up the morale of fellow Christians by refuting the accusations made against them, and demonstrating that Christian teachings were true. By Theodoret's time the situation had changed completely. Christianity, far from being prosecuted, had become the official religion of emperor and Empire. It now was paganism that was under pressure from the government.

In most cities of northern Syria, Christianity was now the religion of the majority of the population, certainly at Antioch, and probably also at Cyrrhus. Theodoret refers disparagingly to the remaining adherents of the traditional cults. According to him, pagans are few, easy to count, and—so he claims—even their Greek is defective.¹⁴ Theodoret exaggerates. There certainly still were some pagans in the upper classes, and there may well have been among the lower classes, too; but paganism was no longer in any sense the religion of the city. It had become a domestic private religion, in some ways like religion in Western society today.¹⁵ In the countryside, too, Christianity was now the dominant religion in many, though not all, parts of Syria.¹⁶ At the same time,

12 Théodoret, *Curatio*, pref. 17.

13 Jörg Ulrich, Christian Anders Jacobsen, and Maijastina Kahlo (eds.), *Continuity and Discontinuity in Early Christian Apologies*, Frankfurt am Main/Bern, 2009.

14 *Curatio* v, 64; see also ix. 28: φροῦδα τὰ τῶν Ἑλλήνων; also, on the disappearance of temples, viii, 68. Theodoret undoubtedly exaggerates; see W. Liebeschuetz, "The View from Antioch: From Libanius via John Chrysostom to John Malalas and Beyond," in Peter Brown and Rita Lizzi Testa (eds.), *Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire: the Breaking of a Dialogue, 1vth–v1th cent.*, Berlin/Vienna/Muenster, 2008, 308–37 this volume ch 16.

15 Isabella Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity: Greeks Jews and Christians at Antioch*, Cambridge, 275–76.

16 F.R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christian Civilization, 370–529*, Leiden, 1993, vol. II, 1–73.

bishops in cities and monks in the countryside were active in different ways to make Syria a completely Christian society.¹⁷

Why then did Theodoret decide to revive a genre of the age of persecution? One can think of personal reasons. Theodoret was a young man who had received an exceptionally thorough secular education, and he was a committed Christian. It was natural for him to want to use his education in the service of his religion. In the previous century his compatriot Chrysostom had been in the same position, and he too had written Christian treatises when he was not yet a priest and thus not in a position to preach in church.

Moreover, there was still one very good reason for writing a Christian Apology. In the Christian Empire there were no Christian schools. Consequently, there remained a tension between the teachings of Christianity and secular education based on a classical literature, which continued to have enormous prestige, but whose authors had worshipped the pagan gods. Christian religion draws its doctrines from the Old and New Testaments, both of which are written in a very simple and popular Greek, and which had originated among Jews, that is by Greek standards, among barbarians. Pagan secular culture continued to challenge the claims of Christian religion; in fact, it provided an alternative world view. Even if most people could ignore the differences,¹⁸ they were real enough. It was therefore quite natural for a highly educated young man to meet the challenge and to demonstrate that with some minor modifications secular education could support rather than contradict Christian teaching.¹⁹

17 E.g., Theodoret, *HE* v, 20–22, 29; Libanius, *or.* xxx, *Pro templis*.

18 The emperor Julian was disturbed by the incompatibility from a pagan point of view. So he forbade Christians to teach. This even Julian's admirer, the pagan historian Ammianus, thought unreasonable. T.M. Banchich, "Julian's School Laws: *Cod. Theod.* 13.3.5 and *Ep.* 42," *Anc.W.* 24 (1993): 5–14.

19 Other Syrians tried to reconcile Christian teaching with classical traditions: see Malalas, *Chronicle*, books 1–v, the reconstructed prehistory, in which the pagan gods figure as deified rulers; esp. *ibid.*, iv, 9–10: the creation and the consubstantial trinity according to 'Orpheus', who is taken to have been a historical writer. *Nemesius*, Bishop of Emesa around 400 CE, also addresses a public well-acquainted with Greek philosophy. He argues that on many topics the incompatible views of different philosophers cancel each other out, but he also points out that on important points, especially on the immortality of the soul, the writings of Plato and other philosophers support Christian teaching. See *Nemesius On the Nature of Man*, *PG.* XL, 504–817, which is translated, with introduction and notes by P. van der Eijk and R.W. Sharples, in *Liverpool Translated Texts for Historians* 49, Liverpool, 2008.

The Contents of the *Curatio*

In this treatise Theodoret sees his role in religious polemic as that of a doctor. Paganism is an illness, but an illness of which the patient is unaware. In spite of this, it is the duty of a specialist in this disease to cure it. It does not matter whether many, or only relatively few, suffer from the disease. A farmer will clear his field of thistles whether they are many or few, and this is what Theodoret considers his duty to do in the case of those suffering from the disease of paganism, but with the important difference that it is his task not to get rid of pagans but to change them.²⁰ His method is persuasion. He will refute paganism with arguments drawn from the writings of their own, most highly respected philosophers.

Jörg Ulrich sees Theodoret's originality in his creation of a systematic Christian theology,²¹ and the successive books of the *Curatio* are indeed logically arranged to provide a comprehensive defence of the Christian view of God, of the divinely created world, and of man's place in it.²² The first book refutes the argument that the Bible cannot prevail over the writings of the classical Greek philosophers because it has been written in poor Greek by men totally lacking in education. Theodoret then goes on to defend the insistence on the importance of faith in the Christian religion, pointing out that faith is demanded not only by Christians, but also by philosophers, and indeed is essential in many situations of everyday life.²³ Both themes are fundamental to his remaining argument. For Theodoret's argument from the beginning to the end depends on the belief that the Bible—as interpreted by Nicene Christianity—is God's message to man. No belief that is incompatible with Scripture is acceptable.²⁴ That is the ultimate test throughout the *Curatio*, and also was to be the core of Theodoret's later opposition to Alexandrian Christology.

²⁰ *Curatio*, I, 1–6.

²¹ J. Ulrich, "The Reception of Greek Christian Apologetic in Theodoret's *Graecarum affectionum curatio*," in J. Ulrich, C. Jacobsen, and M. Kahlo (eds.), *Continuity and Discontinuity in Early Christian Apologies*, Frankfurt am Main/Bern 2009, 113–30, esp. 130.

²² *Curatio*, preface, 4–15.

²³ See István Pasztori-Kupan, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus*, The Early Church Fathers, New York/London, 2006, 98–108.

²⁴ Insistence on the literal meaning of the Bible was of course characteristic of the School of Antioch; cf. L. van Rompay, "Antiochene Biblical Interpretation: Greek and Syriac," in J. Frishman and L. van Rompay (eds.), *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretations*, Louvain, 1997, 103–23.

Book Two explains and defends Christian teaching on the nature of God. Theodoret's attack on polytheism is basically traditional. He cites passages from philosophical writings criticising the traditional views of the gods, most of which have already been used by earlier apologists. Here, as elsewhere, he returns again and again to the immoral behaviour of the gods of Greek mythology,²⁵ and he regularly points out that the views about the nature of the gods, the world, and man expressed by celebrated classical writers are contradictory, and therefore invalidate each other.²⁶

Book Three is concerned with lesser supernatural beings, angels, and demons. Book Four deals with the nature of matter and of the material universe.²⁷ With Book Five we reach Theodoret's defence of the Christian view of the nature of man, focusing on two doctrines: the freedom of the will and the immortality of the soul.²⁸ In Book Six Theodoret defends the Christian view of providence; he essentially—like Milton²⁹—sets out to “assert eternal providence and justify the ways of God to man,” by showing that the apparent evils of this world, such as disease, injustice, and the prosperity of the wicked are perfectly compatible with a world ruled by a just God who can do no wrong.

The next four books are more topical, for they defend Christian teaching that was incompatible with traditional religion and behaviour. The prohibition of animal sacrifices is defended in Book Seven, and the cult of martyrs in Book Eight. In Book Nine Theodoret upholds the claim that Christianity's strict moral rules, and not least its high valuation of chastity,³⁰ are commandments of God, and goes on to argue that the truth of the teachings of Christianity is proved by the enormous number and social range of its converts.³¹ Book Ten justifies the Christian condemnation of traditional forms of divination. The last two books are concerned with the practical application of Christianity. Book Eleven defends the Christian teachings concerned with the purpose of

25 *Curatio*, III, 30–31, 36–41.

26 *Ibid.*, II, 8–15; IV, 4–32; V, 9–28, 44–47.

27 *Ibid.* v, 22–25. But natural science is rejected. Research and speculation about the size of sun, the phases and eclipses of the moon, the moon's distance from the earth and the like is senseless (ἀνόητον), even if it were possible.

28 *Ibid.*, v, 76–80, accepting Plato's doctrine of the functioning of the tripartite soul, explained at v, 29–32.

29 *Paradise Lost*, I, 22.

30 *Curatio*, IX, 57–63. Pagan morality had some religious sanctions, but nowhere near the same extent as Christianity: W. Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion*, Oxford, 1979, 39–54, 90–100.

31 *Curatio*, IX. 15–29.

life, life after death, and the reality of a last judgement,³² themes that did not have anything like the same importance in the traditional religion as they had in Christianity. Book Twelve is about organising life in accordance with divine commands, and it includes a lengthy justification of Christian asceticism—a defence of the monks and hermits who had adopted lives of extreme austerity in order to give themselves entirely to the service and contemplation of God.³³

Technique of Argument

Theodoret's purpose when he wrote this book was to demonstrate that on the issues that really matter the teaching of the classical philosophers, and above all the teaching of Plato—by general consent the greatest of them all—is in agreement with Christian teaching. He can then go on to maintain that Christianity promoted what were by general agreement the highest ideals of Greek-speaking society far more effectively than the traditional cults, and what is more, that it promoted them successfully among a much wider social range.³⁴

To prove his contentions, Theodoret mostly uses traditional arguments, largely based on text passages already used by earlier apologists.³⁵ He is obviously addressing an educated audience, individuals who have a high respect for the classical Greek language, and the great classical Greek authors, above all, Plato. The religion he defends is a religion of professors.³⁶ But while much of his material is drawn from the writings of philosophers, his use of this material

32 Plato has myths of the underworld and the punishment of sinners (e.g., the myth of Er, *Republic*, x, 613E to end; judgment, *ibid.*, 614–15). Theodoret interprets these tales literally, and concludes that they are in agreement with the Christian doctrine of Hell, which of course they are only partially. See N. Sinioglossou, *Plato and Theodoret: The Christian Appropriation of Platonic Philosophy and the Hellenic Intellectual Resistance*, Cambridge, 2008, 176–84.

33 See also *Curatio*, III, 92–94.

34 Most fully *ibid.*, IX, 6–37.

35 Cf. Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition*, Oxford, 1966; E. Everett (ed.), *The Early Church and Greco-Roman Thought*, New York/London 1993. According to Ulrich, “The Reception of Greek Christian Apologetic,” 120–21, out of 340 quotations 175 are from Eusebius's *Praeparatio Euangelica*, 80 from Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis*, and 105 from Aetius; see J. Mansfield and D.T. Runia, *Aetiana: The Method and Intellectual Context of a Doxographer*, Leiden, 1997, 272–90. Alexander Pope's “True wit is nature to advantage dressed / what oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed,” applies to the *Curatio*, as it does to so much classical secular poetry.

36 A. Piganiol, *L'Empire Chrétien*, 325–395, Paris, 1947, 239.

is not philosophical, at least not as we use the word today. Theodoret does not attempt to refute the arguments raised in support of views that are contrary to Christian doctrine. Instead, he points out again and again that the theories of different schools of philosophy are incompatible, and therefore refute each other.³⁷ The sources of Christian doctrine on the other hand, above all the Biblical testimonials, are unanimous, or so he claims; therefore they confirm each other, and must be accepted as true.³⁸

Theodoret cites a large number of passages from Greek philosophers, above all from Plato, that seem to reject the ideas and practices of the traditional polytheistic religion, and support the teachings of Christianity.³⁹ But he always argues from extracts, and hardly ever takes into account the original context of the passages that he cites. Theodoret completely ignores the development of the logical train of thought in which the passages he cites have a definite place. This means that he can regularly read into passages implications that their author certainly did not intend them to have, and he can make the teaching of Plato appear closer to Christian doctrine than it actually is. To give one example out of many: Theodoret quotes the *Timaeus* to argue that Plato's view of the divine creation of the world, creation through God's word, his *logos*, is the same as the Christian view expressed in the opening sentence of John's Gospel. He ignores the fact that for Plato *logos* does not have the same meaning as for St John, and that for Plato matter is coeternal with God, and was only given shape, not brought into existence when the *Demiourgos* created the world.⁴⁰

37 *Curatio*, IV, 4–32; V, 9–43, 50.

38 *Ibid.*, V, 9–47: conflicting views of philosophers on the nature of man; V, 48–52; unanimity of Christian texts. VI, 3–21: diversity of philosophical views denying divine providential government of the world; VI, 22–73: arguments of Plato and Plotinus in favour of providential government of the world; VI, 57–73: Christian teaching on divine providence. VI, 74–87.

39 Theodoret cites Plotinus, *Ennead*, III, 2, in *Curatio*, VI, 59–72, and *Ennead*, V, 1, 6–7, in *Curatio*, II, 83–85, but he does not refute the doctrines of Neoplatonism, the contemporary development of Platonic philosophy that was offering pagan intellectuals, like the emperor Julian, new and more up to date arguments with which to defend the beliefs and rituals of the traditional religion. Augustine, in *De civitate dei*, was equally content to refute traditional Roman paganism, but ignored Neoplatonism. On this, see Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 304–5; Alan Cameron, *Vergil and his Commentators*, in Peter Brown and Rita Lizzi Testa (eds.), *Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire: The Breaking of a Dialogue*, Vienna/Berlin, 2012, 517–25, esp. 522–525.

40 *Curatio*, IV, 37–40 on Plato, *Timaeus* 38, b–c. For a summary of Plato's view of creation, see W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy: The Later Plato and the Academy*, Cambridge, 1978, vol. V, 253–69. For a detailed analysis of how Theodoret has simplified and sometimes misreads Plato's account of the creation in the *Timaeus*, see N. Siniogloussou,

Theodoret's case is nevertheless plausible. It is presented elegantly. More importantly, Christians and Greek philosophers did share a lot of common ground. Many of Plato's doctrines—that there is a single supreme Good⁴¹ from which everything that is good in the world derives its value, that God (or the gods) can be responsible for nothing but good,⁴² that the soul is immortal,⁴³ that it is better to suffer injustice than to inflict it on others,⁴⁴ as well as Plato's rejection of the characterization of the gods in Greek mythology and poetry⁴⁵—are indeed remarkably close to Christian doctrines. That, incidentally, is probably one reason why the declining influence of Christianity in Western society today has been accompanied by a sharp reduction of the place the writings of Plato occupy in education and general culture. The fact that Christianity was seen to be more “philosophical” than the traditional cults, greatly helped Christianity to supersede them.⁴⁶

Defence of the Language of the Bible

The refutation of paganism with arguments drawn from pagan philosophy had been the traditional strategy of Christian apologists, notably of Origen, but it goes back to Clement of Alexandria, Athenagoras, Justin, and even to Paul's sermon at Athens. Neither Theodoret's arguments, nor the material cited in their support, are at all original. His immediate model was the *Praeparatio euangelica* of Eusebius.⁴⁷ But Theodoret's Apology inevitably had to confront problems specific to his own place and time. One of these was the extremely

Plato and Theodoret: The Christian Appropriation of Platonic Philosophy and the Hellenic Intellectual Resistance, Cambridge, 2008, 152–165.

41 *Curatio*, II, 33–36, cites successively Plato, *Tim.* 27e–28a, 37e–38a; *Crit.* 47c–d, 48a.

42 *Curatio*, V, 33–38.

43 *Ibid.*, V, 40–43, cites Plato, *Phd.* 79–80.

44 *Curatio*, XII, 42, cites Plato, *Crit.* 49b–c.

45 Plato, *Resp.* II, 377–83.

46 See the still very much worth reading analysis of A.D. Nock, *Conversion*, Oxford, 1933, esp. 212–53; M. Frede, “Monotheism and Pagan Philosophy in Late Antiquity,” in Polymnia Athanassiadi and Michael Frede (eds.), *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, Oxford, 1999, 41–67; P. Athanassiadi, “The Chaldaean Oracles,” in *Pagan Monotheism*, 149–83; A. Fürst, “Monotheism between Cult and Politics,” in S. Mitchell and P. van Nuffelen (eds.), *One God: Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire*, Cambridge, 2010, 82–99.

47 Ulrich, “The Reception of Greek Christian Apologetic,” 115: “This work is in many respects similar to Eusebius' *Praeparatio euangelica*, apart from the fact it is some 100 years younger”; also *ibid.*, 128: “Originality was not needed. It was good enough to rely on a

high prestige of classical Greek language and literature, which was inculcated by the education that many of his reader would have received. Another was the fact that he was living and writing in a bilingual environment. Theodoret's defence of the language of the Bible and the relatively humble social status of St Paul and the apostles is interesting because it faces both of these difficulties. That the origin of Christianity was Jewish, which was neither Greek nor Roman but "barbarian," was an issue that had been tackled by Christian apologists from the beginning. But none of his predecessors⁴⁸ had been so outspoken in their rejection of any Greek claim of cultural superiority as Theodoret. This is a point he makes repeatedly.⁴⁹ Defending the unliterary Greek of the Bible, and the lack of literary culture of the apostles, Theodoret simply denies the unique value of Greek culture, and its superiority over that of barbarians. In fact, he insists that the Greeks obtained their culture from barbarians.⁵⁰ Of the admired writers using Greek, some were actually not even born in Greece. Theodoret insists that differences in language do not detract from the essential unity of mankind. Among barbarians one finds just as many persons striving for virtue, or, for that matter, given to vice, as among Greeks. The Greeks themselves are aware of this. They admire Anacharsis, who was a Scythian, as well as the wisdom of the Egyptians and of the Indian Brahmins.⁵¹

There is nothing uniquely superior about the Greek language.⁵² For other peoples it is the Greeks who speak a barbarian language.⁵³ All languages have the same character, the same intellectual quality (διάνοια), because all human nature is fundamentally one. The barbarians have arts and science like the Greeks. Their schemes are often better than those of the Greeks, for instance, they employ more cunning military strategies. There are barbarians whose speech is more precise than that of the Greeks. He is thinking particularly about the Persians. He has heard men who had been on diplomatic mission in Persia reporting on the Persians' skill and precision in argument. The Indians have the reputation of being even more intelligent than the Persians. Even the nomads of the Arabian desert, who have not the slightest knowledge of

reliable source." True, but this could be said of the works of many classical authors. It did not hinder them from communicating an important individual message.

48 The nearest is Tatian; see J.F. Foystik, "Tatian the Barbarian," in *Continuity and Discontinuity*, 23–43.

49 *Curatio*, I, 9–36; v, 58–60.

50 *Ibid.*, I, 12–26.

51 *Ibid.*, I, 50; v, 58.

52 *Ibid.*, v, 58–59.

53 *Ibid.*, v, 70–71.

Greek literature, have a lively intelligence, and they are well able to discover the truth and to refute lies.⁵⁴ As for the Egyptians, outstanding Greek philosophers have admitted the superiority of their philosophers. Theodoret remarks that those who know Latin⁵⁵ say that the Romans, too, have poets, historians, and orators, and that their wisdom is often expressed more concisely than that of the Greeks.⁵⁶

All this is, of course, quite true, but you would not find any admission of this kind in the writings of either Libanius or Chrysostom, who must both have significantly influenced the young Theodoret.⁵⁷ Theodoret assures his reader that he is not disparaging the Greek language “of which he has a small share” (*Curatio*, v, 75: ἡς ἀμυγέπη μετέλαχον) The modesty of Theodoret’s claim to have only a small knowledge of Greek could be no more than a literary topos. But as he probably wrote this work when he was already Bishop of Cyrrhus, Theodoret is probably alluding to his own Syriac background, because he was now bishop of a city whose urban population, and certainly most of the peasants in its territory, were considerably more Syriac in language and culture than the population of his native Antioch.⁵⁸

Defence of the Socially Humble Status of the Disciples

Theodoret’s defence of the socially humble status of the disciples and of the unliterary Greek of the gospels serves to show that Christianity was much more democratic than classical pagan philosophy. Theodoret can go on to point out that the plain and more popular language of Christian writings enabled them to reach vastly more people than the teachings of the philosophers. Here again it is significant that Theodoret emphasises that the impact of Christian teaching has been felt far beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire, among Scythians and Sarmatians, among Persians and Indians, and even among Ethiopians.⁵⁹ He is surely exaggerating, but Theodoret’s cosmopolitanism

54 Ibid., v, 71–73.

55 Theodoret implies that he himself does not know Latin, but that is just how Cicero refers to Greek, which he knew very well.

56 Ibid., v, 74.

57 There are fragments of five sermons *In laudem Ioannis Chrysostomi* in Photius, *Bibl.* 273.

58 Th. Urbainczyk, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus*, Ann Arbor, 2002, 74–76 on Syriac speaking ascetics of Cyrrhestica in the *Historia Religiosa*. On the long-term development: H. Cotton, R.G. Hoyland, D. Price, and D.J. Wasserstein (eds.), *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Near East*, Cambridge, 2009.

59 *Curatio*, v, 60; VIII, 8.2–7.

contrasts with narrower views of contemporary Christian writers in the West, who were not yet interested in spreading Christianity beyond the Empire.⁶⁰

The Equality of Women

It is worth noting that Theodoret applies the doctrine of the unity of all human-kind explicitly also to women. The first woman was created from Adam's rib so that she should have the same nature (φύσις) as man, and the same laws are binding on men and women. The bodies of men and women differ, but not their souls. Woman is as rational (λογική) as man, as conscious of what needs to be done, and as aware of what to avoid and what to seek. Sometimes she is better than a man at seeing what will be useful, and she can be a good counselor. Man and woman have equal access to the "mysteries," that is to baptism, and they ought to have equal access to the "temples" (εἰς τοὺς θεῖους νεώς). The promised reward for virtue is the same for men and women.⁶¹ This statement of the essential equality of men and women goes well beyond anything to be found in the writings of Chrysostom, even in his later, more woman-friendly texts. Theodoret's insistence on women's equal right of access to "sacred temples" explicitly refers to the fact that Christian men and women have an equal right and indeed duty to take Communion, while pagan initiation was generally only available to men; one may wonder whether he is perhaps also making a very cautious criticism of the otherwise universally accepted rule that women must not occupy any position of leadership in the Church.

Demons, Angels and the Angelic Life of Monks

Pagans had argued that Christians should not condemn polytheism because they too honour a multitude of supernatural beings whom they call angels. Theodoret emphatically refutes this argument. He draws a sharp distinction between the beings whom pagans worship, whom he describes as demons,

60 See E.A. Thompson, "Christianity and the Northern Barbarians," in A. Momigliano (ed.), *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, Oxford, 1963, 56–78, on 64. In the East, Chrysostom was concerned with the Christianity of the Goths in the Crimea.

61 *Curatio*, v, 56–57. But note that Theodoret insists (against Plato in the *Republic*) that nature has assigned its particular role to each sex, to women to spin wool, and to men to till the fields and go to war (ix, 40).

and the angels recognized by Christians. Demons are in fact malevolent devils, while angels are invisible and immaterial beings who serve and glorify the one and only God. Christians honour, but do not worship them.⁶² Theodoret goes on to claim that as angels have no need to reproduce, they have no sex, and no distinction of male and female.⁶³ This is in fact the ultimate justification of the ascetic life: monks and hermits are humans who seek to live the life of angels.⁶⁴ The much criticised and misunderstood monks and hermits found in towns and villages and on mountain tops are in fact men who are striving to live like angels, and often succeeding.⁶⁵

Theodoret thus turns his defence of the Christian belief in angels into a defence of Christian asceticism, which we know to have been under pagan attack,⁶⁶ and which also made some Christians uneasy both in the East⁶⁷ and in the West.⁶⁸ The huge expansion of Christian asceticism was a development of the fourth century. So the defence of monasticism is not found in the earlier Apologies. But the theme had evidently become extremely topical by the early fifth century, for Theodoret returns to it in Book Twelve, when he comments on the fact that people are accusing monks and hermits of living lives that depart a long way from the strict ascetic standards they claim to be observing.⁶⁹ Theodoret concedes that there is a significant amount of truth in that accusation. His response is that classical philosophers too had insisted on a highly austere lifestyle, but that they, like the Christian ascetics, had found that it was very difficult to maintain. Even Socrates and Plato, the greatest of the philosophers, had not always—so Theodoret claims—lived by the moral rules they advocated,⁷⁰ while he insists that the great majority of the much-criticised Christian ascetics largely succeed in living a truly ascetic life. They are, in fact, the true philosophers.⁷¹

62 *Curatio*, III, 88.

63 *Ibid.*, III, 87–91.

64 *Ibid.*, III, 88–93.

65 *Ibid.*, III, 91–94.

66 Eunapius, v. *Soph.* VI, 11; Zosimus V, 23.

67 P. Canivet, *Le monachisme syrien selon Théodort de Cyr*, Paris, 1977, 74–75; Chrysostom, *Adversus oppugnatores vitae monasticae*, PG 47, 317–86; Synesius, *Dio Chrysostom*, ed. Treu, 24–34.

68 David G. Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinian Controversy*, Oxford, 2007.

69 *Curatio*, XII, 33–37.

70 *Ibid.*, XII, 36–71.

71 *Ibid.*, XII, 27–37. On the actual differences between Platonic and Christian asceticism, see Siniosoglou, *Plato and Theodoret*, 109–46.

As for those who fail to maintain their austere lifestyle, Theodoret argues that due to human nature and the reality of free it will always be a struggle to live by the laws that God has laid down. Those who manage do so, or come close to doing so, will always be very few.⁷² It is therefore wrong to condemn Christian asceticism, or indeed any moral system, because not all who profess to adhere to its rules actually do so. The guilt of a wrongdoer must be judged by the motive that induced him to commit the wrong, and the degree of temptation that led him to commit it.⁷³

Cult of Martyrs Defended

Book Eight defends the cult of martyrs. The cult was not defended by earlier apologists, because like monasticism it only came into being in the last years of the persecutions. The vast expansion of the cult only happened in the fourth century.⁷⁴ The cult of individual martyrs, however, soon became immensely popular not only among the laity, but also among bishops who found that the discovery of relics increased their personal prestige, and that by building a sanctuary over a martyr's tomb they could greatly increase the prestige and income of their see. Chrysostom's sermons reveal that by the last quarter of the fourth century the festivals of local martyrs had become extremely popular at Antioch⁷⁵ Theodoret could claim, with some justification, that festivals of the martyrs were replacing festivals of the traditional gods.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, some Christians still remained suspicious of a cult⁷⁷ that inevitably was rejected by pagans. So there was a need for the cult to be explained and justified.⁷⁸

72 *Curatio*, XII, 80–86.

73 *Ibid.*, XII, 87–97; on degrees of intention, cf. Nemesius, *On the Nature of Man*, translated, with an introduction and notes by R.W. Sharples and P.J. van der Eijk, Liverpool, 2008, 68–176.

74 H. Delehay, *Les origines du culte des martyrs*, Brussels, 1933, 50–99. Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, London, 1981.

75 E. Soler, *Le sacré et le salut à Antioche au iv^e siècle apr. J.C.*, Beirut, 2006, 189–214.

76 *Curatio*, VIII, 68–70.

77 At least in the West some people were suspicious of banquets at tombs; see Peter Brown *The Cult of the Saints*, Chicago/London, 1981, 26–27, referring to Augustine, *Ep.* 29 and the treatise *De cura gerenda pro mortuis*, CSEL 41, 623–60, tran. by J. Lacy, in *Fathers of the Church* 27, Washington, 1955, 351–84; Jerome, *Contra Vigilantium* 4, *PL* 23, 353–68, esp. 357b.

78 The whole of *Curatio*, VIII.

Theodoret's strategy is to show that all elements of the cult of martyrs have precedents in Greek culture, and that by generally accepted standards the martyrs are more worthy of religious honours than the individuals deified by the pagans. He points out that Greeks had deified men. His examples are Heracles, Asclepius, Dionysus, and the Dioscuri, all of whom had human mothers.⁷⁹ The pagan selection of individuals for deification is arbitrary. Socrates was not deified nor were the universally recognised Stoic philosophers, nor the most celebrated statesmen.⁸⁰ Theodoret points out that the Greek cities venerate the tombs of the local hero,⁸¹ and that Greeks offer sacrifices at the graves of dead relatives.⁸² There should therefore be nothing shocking in the fact that Christians honour their martyrs. What must be understood, however, is that Christians do not honour martyrs as gods, but only as friends of God.⁸³ Theodoret cites Hesiod to document the traditional Greek belief that the dead heroes of the "golden age" still have the power to protect mortals.⁸⁴ The Greek belief in the powers of heroes is therefore not essentially different from the Christian belief in the powers of martyrs. He goes on to argue that by the moral standards upheld by Plato, Christian martyrs are worthy of honours. They are, in fact, more worthy than many individuals given divine honours by the Greeks.⁸⁵ Finally he argues from success. The cult of many individuals given divine honours by the pagans, including the cult of some Roman emperors, ended with the recipient's death. Of the traditional hero cults many have long been abandoned, their sanctuaries destroyed, and even their sites forgotten. The martyrs continue to be honoured by thousands; their sanctuaries are flourishing. Their festivals are replacing the traditional festivals of the gods,⁸⁶ and they are honoured not only during their festivals, but daily.⁸⁷ Numerous ex-votive images of eyes, feet, and hands, some of gold others of wood, are evidence of the effectiveness of their intercession on behalf of sick petitioners.⁸⁸ The cult of martyrs is therefore perfectly consistent with the best Greek traditions, and what is more, we have definite evidence that martyrs do in fact enjoy a special relationship with God.

79 Ibid., VIII, 12.

80 Ibid., VIII, 56ff.

81 Ibid., VIII, 29–32.

82 Ibid., VIII, 33–34.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid., VIII, 7–8.

85 Ibid., VIII, 24; also IX, 68–72.

86 Ibid., VIII, 68–70.

87 Ibid., VIII, 63.

88 Ibid., VIII, 64.

Public Religion Ignored

Theodoret's book is clearly addressed to an educated elite. His apologetic strategy therefore throws light on the attitudes and values of that readership, the elite of the cities of the East. Comparison with Western Apologies reveals a striking difference between the strategies used, respectively, in the East and in the West by defenders of Christianity. In the West the public role of religion, the religion of the state as opposed to that of the individual, remained important. The Christianity that Theodoret recommends is a private religion, as is the pagan religion that he condemns. For him true religion is something that benefits the individual soul, that offers salvation, not something that ensures the success of the state. In this respect his religion is closer to the religion of Western Europe today than to the paganism of Symmachus or the Christianity of Constantine.⁸⁹

In the West, however, the arguments for or against Christianity continued to assume that establishing the correct form of worship, and the right way to obtain divine support, was essential not only for the salvation of individuals, but also for the welfare and indeed survival of city and Empire. In their writings opposing the restoration of the Altar of Victory to the senate chamber at Rome both Ambrose⁹⁰ and Prudentius⁹¹ had to answer the argument, going back at least to Cicero,⁹² that the phenomenal success of the Roman state was proof that the ancestral techniques for gaining the gods' support were effective.

The most famous example of Western apologetic is of course Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*, which was almost contemporary with Theodoret's *Curatio*.⁹³

89 The discovery on a papyrus of one of the Constantinian letters cited by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* makes it unlikely that Eusebius forged these documents. See A.H.M. Jones and T.C. Skeat, "Notes on the Authenticity of the Constantinian Documents in Eusebius's *Life of Constantine*," *JEH* 5 (1954): 196–200. Jones's argument has been generally accepted. See Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, translated with introduction and commentary by Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall, Oxford, 1999, 16–19. These letters strongly suggest that Constantine's motives in turning to Christianity were strictly religious, and that he was sincerely convinced that worshipping the Christian God was the best way to ensure divine support for the Empire.

90 Ambrose, *Ep.* 73 (Maur. 18), 4–7, 35–38, answering Symmachus, *Relatio*, III, 9, 16–17 of 384 CE.

91 Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum* II, of 402/3 CE.

92 Cotta in Cic. *De Nat. deorum*, III, 2.5–6: *mihi ita persuasi, Romulum auspiciis Numam sacris constitutis fundamenta iecisse nostrae civitatis, quae numquam profecto sine summa placatione deorum immortalium tanta esse potuisset.*

93 On the writing of *City of God*, 413–425 CE, see Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 299–329.

Augustine started this great work after Alaric and his Goths had captured and sacked Rome, when traditionalist pagans were attributing responsibility for the disaster to Christianity and the abandonment of the traditional cult of the gods. Augustine could not restrict himself to abstract arguments. He had to demonstrate the worthlessness and absurdity of the traditional rites before he could refute a belief that was fundamental to Roman public religion, by arguing that no secular state, whether pagan or Christian, had an indispensable place in the historical realization of God's purpose, and that it was therefore a mistake to expect that any ritual, whether pagan or Christian, could guarantee the success of the state that had adopted it.⁹⁴ Orosius sought to bolster Augustine's argument by collecting examples from the history of the whole world that would prove that worship of the gods had never saved worshippers from war, disease, fire, famine, earthquakes, in fact, from disasters and evil deeds of any kind.⁹⁵ That Theodoret did not feel the need to refute the view that the adoption of Christianity had caused the sack of Rome and related disasters, suggests that what was happening in Rome and Italy was of little concern to the Syrian civic elite.⁹⁶

But even in the East, the view from Constantinople was not the same as that from Antioch. Sozomen, who wrote his *Ecclesiastical History* a few years before Theodoret wrote his, does describe Alaric's invasion of Italy and the sack of Rome. But he also tells us that all persons of good sense were aware that the calamities of the siege of Rome were a divine punishment for the luxury, debauchery, and injustice of the city's inhabitants.⁹⁷ Moreover, he ends his history with four chapters describing the defeat of various usurpers, and one chapter about the discovery of the relics of Zechariah the prophet and those of

94 Thus rejecting a view that incidentally was held not only by pagan Romans, but also by Christians, and indeed had at one time been held by Augustine himself. See R.A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine*, Cambridge, 1970, 45–71.

95 Orosius, *Historiarum adversus paganos libri septem, Praef.*, written from 416 CE.

96 Cf. Fergus Millar, "Ethnic Identity in the Near East, 325–450: Language, Religion and Culture," *Mediterranean Archaeology* 11 (1998): 159–76, esp. 160: "Latin language, as far as one can see, did not play a significant part in determining personal or group identity."

97 Sozomen, *HE*, IX, 6. In Socrates, *HE*, VII, 9–11, the narrative of the fall of Rome is framed by accounts of persecution of the Novatian sect, implying that the sack of Rome was a punishment. See H. Leppin, *Von Constantin dem Grossen zu Theodosius II: Das christliche Kaisertum bei den Kirchenhistorikern Socrates, Sozomen und Theodoret*, Göttingen 1995, 144–45, 258–59: Theodoret (like Augustine) did not believe that the Roman Empire enjoyed divine protection just because it was Christian.

Stephen the first martyr,⁹⁸ which serve to prove that if a ruler serves God with reverence, as Honorius and his sister Placidia had done, God will defend their empire.⁹⁹ But for the citizens of Antioch Italy and Rome were so far away that they did not worry about the reasons why God, or indeed the gods, had not prevented the sack of Rome.

Theodoret did not believe that emperors and Empire were guaranteed divine protection just because they were Christian, and he rebukes those who argued that the great advance of Christianity was only possible because it was being promoted by the emperors.¹⁰⁰ But he could and did argue, as Chrysostom had argued before him,¹⁰¹ that the fact that Christianity had won numerous adherents among peoples of all classes, both inside and outside the Empire, despite Christians having been persecuted over many years by the emperors, was extremely strong evidence that the beliefs of Christianity are true, and that the Church enjoys the favour of God.¹⁰²

One may ask how such a moderate and reasonable individual fits into an age of bitter and unforgiving doctrinal disputes. Theodoret was, of course, more often the victim rather than the promoter of fanatical intolerance. But his writings display the symptoms of an intolerant age. Theodoret always insists on the correctness of his own interpretation. He does not set out arguments to disprove opposing views. His favourite strategy is to point out that the pagan views of one writer are refuted by contrary opinions of other pagans, and the language he uses to characterise the views he opposes is inevitably mocking,¹⁰³ describing them with words such as “foolish,”¹⁰⁴ or “insane,”¹⁰⁵ or, as the title of the work implies, “sick,”¹⁰⁶ and he takes it for granted that the cult of the pagan

98 Sozomen, IX, 11–17. The work is evidently not quite finished, for the narrative about the relics of St Stephen is promised, but not provided.

99 Ibid., 16.

100 *Curatio*, IX, 30ff.

101 Chrysostom, *S. Babyla*, 41–42 (PG 50, 544).

102 *Curatio*, V, 65–69; IX, 11–18; 12.31: Christian constancy under Roman persecution; *ibid.*, 32. under current Persian persecution. When Theodoret wrote his *Ecclesiastical History* between 444 and 448 that persecution was over: *HE*, V, 38.

103 For more, generally, on the language customary in doctrinal controversies, see Maijastina Kahlo, *Forbearance and Compulsion: The Rhetoric of Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in Late Antiquity*, London, 2009.

104 E.g., *Curatio*, V, 76, ὁ ὕβρις τῶν φιλοσόφων.

105 E.g., *ibid.*, I, 114, μανία; V, 22, τερθεία = clap-trap; *ibid.*, 25: cosmologizing philosophers compared to men trying to write on water.

106 Praef. 17, he is writing to care for the sick; so also II, 22, οἴσσεως πάθος.

gods, and of course also Christian heresies, have been inspired by demons.¹⁰⁷ Of course, this discourse was not personal to Theodoret. It is the language that was conventionally used for debates of this kind, but it did not facilitate conciliation and harmony. It surely is also the case that when both sides in a controversy base their case on statements taken out of their original context, if they focus both attack and defence on what today are known as “sound bites,” the result will inevitably be to fix attention on what divides rather than unites the disputants. Another factor that embittered these controversies was that they were about very difficult issues, and so inevitably became highly personalised. Theodoret himself was only reinstated at the Council of Chalcedon after he had been compelled—much against his will—to anathematise Nestorius and Theodore of Mopsuestia. In short, the style in which religious controversies were discussed and settled ensured that they became progressively more difficult to resolve and more bitter. Theodoret was a man of good will,¹⁰⁸ but he operated in a culture of confrontation, which made compromise very difficult.¹⁰⁹

107 See III. 59–65, X.6–9.

108 See Averil Cameron's characterization of the debate in Theodoret's *Eranistes* in her *Dialoguing in Late Antiquity*, Washington, 2014, 44–47.

109 This seems to me at least as important a factor in the bitterness of the Christological controversy as the network partisanship emphasized by A.M. Schor, *Theodoret's People: Social Networks and Religious Conflict in Late Roman Syria*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 2011, esp. 196–99.

The School of Antioch¹ and Its Opponents*

The Origin of the School of Antioch

In the Christological controversy that so deeply divided the Church in the fifth century, ecclesiastical and imperial politics did much to make the controversy bitter and intractable. Arguments about the correct interpretation of Biblical texts was what dominated the debates of the assembled bishops, however. Bible-based theology was the central issue. The Alexandrians' hostility to the theological views held by the Antiochenes was a principal driving force, and Theodoret, who was bishop of the relatively unimportant city of Cyrrhus, thus came to be at the centre of the controversy. He was not only an apologist and ecclesiastical historian, but also a prolific commentator on the Bible.² As such, he was the principal living theologian of the Antiochene party.³

Christian commentators on the Bible did not feel free to produce their own interpretations. They felt bound by exegetical traditions.⁴ Insistence on the literal meaning of the Bible was characteristic of the School of Antioch, while the Alexandrians insisted on the validity not only of typological, but also, and abundantly, of allegorical interpretations.⁵

The Antiochene tradition of biblical exegesis is known as the School of Antioch, but it was actually a succession, rather than a formal school.⁶ The

* This article was not published previously.

1 D.S. Wallace Hadrill, *Christian Antioch*, Cambridge, 1982, esp. 27–51.

2 J.-N. Guinot, *l'exégèse de Théodoret de Cyr*, Paris, 1945.

3 A. M. Shor, *Theodoret's People: Social Networks and Religious Conflict in Late Roman Syria*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 2010.

4 Hagit Amirav, *Rhetoric and Tradition: John Chrysostom on Noah and the Flood*, Louvain: Peeters, 2003. More generally, especially on the classical background of Christian exegesis: Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, Cambridge, 1997.

5 The authors of the School of Antioch, as well as Ephrem the Mesopotamian, did in practice make a distinction between typological interpretations of biblical passages as foreshadowing New Testament events and Christian concepts and the much freer allegorical interpretation. While they employed the first, they avoided the second.

6 On the Antiochene exegetical "method," see L. van Rompay, "Antiochene Biblical Interpretation: Greek and Syriac," in J. Frishman and L. van Rompay (eds.), *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretations*, Louvain, 1997, 103–23.

commentaries of Diodorus († c. 390), Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 360–428),⁷ and Theodoret of Cyrrhus (c. 393–457) clearly belong to this succession, but its origins are much less clear. Recently it has even been suggested that the exegetical tradition originated with Diodorus († 391/2), the teacher of Theodore of Mopsuestia,⁸ who was a strong supporter of Meletius, the Nicene contender for the see of Antioch, and an eloquent opponent of the Homoians who in the reign of Constantius controlled of the city's churches.⁹ John Chrysostom, the greatest Antiochene of them all, was certainly influenced by Diodorus since he had spent some time as a student at Diodorus's *asceterion*.¹⁰ But he did not initiate the tradition in his *Theodoret's People*. Schor has ignored Eusebius of Emesa (c. 300–c. 359), who was much older than Diodorus, yet evidently already belonged to the same tradition, as Jerome had already observed;¹¹ Jerome's assessment appears to be essentially correct. No more than a few fragments of Diodorus's commentary on *Genesis* have come down to us,¹² but such as they are, they confirm a definite relationship to the commentary of Eusebius of Emesa.¹³ They also show

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- 7 M.F. Wiles, "Theodore of Mopsuestia as Representative of the Antiochene School," *Cambridge History of the Bible*, Cambridge, 1970, 489–510.
 - 8 Theodore was a pupil both of the Antiochene sophist Libanius and of Diodorus (Socrates, *HE*, 6.3; Sozomen, *HE*, 8.2), as was John Chrysostom.
 - 9 C. Schäublin, *Untersuchungen zu Methode und Herkunft der antiochenischen Exegese*, Theophaneia 23, Cologne/Bonn, 1974; most recently: Adam Schor, *Theodoret's People*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 2011, 68–70.
 - 10 Socrates, *HE*, 6.3; Sozomen, *HE*, 8.2.
 - 11 *Eusèbe d'Émèse: Commentaire de la Genèse*, Texte arménien de l'édition de Venise, fragments grecs et syriaques, avec traduction par F. Petit, L. van Rompay, J. S. Weitenberg, Louvain: Peeters 2011; Jerome, *De viris illustribus*, 119.
 - 12 J. Deconinck, *Essai sur la chaîne de l'Octateuque, avec une édition des commentaires de Diodore de Tarse, qui s'y trouvent contenus*, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études 195, Paris, 1912; also *PG* 33. 1562–99, which is, however, unreliable: see Abramowski, "Untersuchungen zu Diodor von Tarsus," *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 30 (1931): 234–62.
 - 13 On *Gen.* 1. 2 compare Diodorus (Deconinck) Fr. 4. 1 and 4. 15ff. = *PG* 1563C–D, with Eusebius, *Commentaire* 5a–b (8–9). On *Gen.* 2.8: compare Diodorus (Deconinck) fr. 12 = *PG* 1566A with Eusebius, *Commentaire* 13a (18). On *Gen.* 2. 23 compare: Diodorus (Deconinck) Fr. 13. 9 = *PG* 33. 1566B with Eusebius, *Commentaire* 18 (p. 24). On *Gen.* 3.1 (one sentence only) compare Diodorus *PG* 33. 1566B–1567A with Eusebius, *Commentaire* 20a (26). On *Gen.* 22. 12 compare Diodorus (ed. Petit), *Collectio Coisliniana*, Turnhout, 1986, 204, ll. 1–14 with Eusebius *Commentaire* 79 (68). For thoughts about the relationship between the exegesis of Diodorus and that of Eusebius, see Ter Haar Romeny, "Eusebius of Emesa's Commentary on Genesis and the origins of the Antiochene school," in J. Frishman and

that Diodorus was far from simply following Eusebius. His commentary is an independent, though related work. Both belong to the same school, the School of Antioch.

In a paper elsewhere I have compared the commentaries of John Chrysostom and Eusebius of Emesa on the first chapters of the Book of Genesis.¹⁴ It appeared to me that the two commentators belong to essentially the same school. The differences between their commentaries are largely—though not entirely—a result of one being the work of a moral preacher and the other of a commentator. The differences between the two commentaries are in accord with Theodore of Mopsuestia's definition of the respective duties of a preacher and a commentator in the preface to his commentary on the Gospel of St John: "We consider it to be the task of the commentator to comment on words which are difficult for most people, that of the preacher however, is to reflect on words that are clear and to speak about them."¹⁵ But there are nevertheless considerable similarities. Both ask the same kind of questions, often of the same passages, and produce the same answers. Neither is concerned to reconcile Scripture with views held by secular philosophers about the nature of the physical world, both employ literal exegesis, and both avoid the allegorical interpretation favored by the School of Alexandria.¹⁶ Jerome thought that Chrysostom "followed" not only Diodorus, but Eusebius of Emesa as well.¹⁷ The School of Antioch can certainly be traced back to Eusebius of Emesa.

Going back beyond Eusebius of Emesa, the earliest-known writer who can be shown to have belonged to this tradition is Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch (c. 169–183). Theophilus may also have been a native of Mesopotamia.¹⁸

L. van Rompay, *The Book of Genesis*, 132–35; also *A Syrian in Greek Dress*, Louvain, 1997, 89–91, 179–182; F. Petit, "Diodore de Tarse dans la tradition caténique sur la Genèse et l'Exode," *Le Muséon* 112 (1999): 363–79; E. Schweizer, "Diodor von Tarsus als Exeget," *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 40 (1941): 33–75, esp. 68.

14 "How God Made the World," *Antiquité Tardive* 22 (2014), 243–53.

15 Quoted by L. van Rompay in "Antiochene biblical interpretation: Greek and Syriac," in Frishman and van Rompay, *The Book of Genesis*, 101–23, on 104–5.

16 Ephrem, too, avoids allegory: *St Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose Works, including Including Commentary on Genesis*, translated tran. by E.G. Matthews & J.P. Amar, ed. K. McVey, Fathers of the Church 91, Washington: CUA, 1994, e.g., in *Commentary on Genesis*, Section I, 1: "nobody can say that the things that relate to these six days are symbolic, . . . or that other things are symbolized for us by their names."

17 *De viris illustribus*, 129; *Eusebii Emiseni Diodorice sectator*.

18 Theophilus, *Ad Autolycum*, text and translation by Robert Grant, Oxford, 1970. Grant deduces a Mesopotamian origin from *Ad Aut.*, 2.24: "The Tigris and the Euphrates are neighbours of our region."

Theophilus, Eusebius, and Chrysostom repeatedly make the same points, even if they do not make them in quite the same ways. All agree that the newly created earth was invisible (as in the Septuagint), because it was covered with water.¹⁹ All insist that God did not create the world from preexisting matter.²⁰ All three are troubled by the idea that the biblical text, when literally interpreted, implies that there are two “heavens,” the firmament of *Genesis* 1.6, which separates two levels of water, and the heaven above that, which God had created together with the earth “in the beginning” (*Gen.* 1.1).²¹ Chrysostom denies that this means that there really are several heavens. In his opinion we simply don’t know the nature of the firmament, and should not meddle in matters that are beyond us. All we need to know is that the Lord gave the command, and the firmament came into being. Eusebius’s argument is different, but he concludes that we are not wiser than Scripture. Like Chrysostom, he considers the application of reason to this problem to be inappropriate.

Theophilus and Chrysostom, but not Eusebius, take the statement that God created heaven and earth to mean that God created the heaven before he created the earth, the roof before its supporting walls, and both argue that this exemplifies God’s omnipotence.²² According to Theophilus and Chrysostom the narrative that God made plants grow (*Gen.* 1.11) before he had created the sun (*Gen.* 1.14), is intended to demonstrate that it was God, not the sun, who brought into existence the plant world, and that it is therefore wrong to worship the sun.²³ Theophilus and Chrysostom agree that when God said “let *us* make man in our image!” he was addressing Jesus, here described by Theophilus as God’s Wisdom and Logos, and by Chrysostom as Counsellor, Prince of Peace and Son of God.²⁴ The commentaries of Eusebius of Emesa and Chrysostom are almost entirely without allegory, while there are some, but only a few, typological interpretations in the *Ad Autolycum*.²⁵

19 *Gen.*, 1.1: Theoph., *Ad Aut.*, 2.4; Eusebius, *Commentaire*, 3 (29); J. Chrys., *In Gen. Hom.*, 3.1 (33).

20 Theoph., *Ad Aut.*, 4a; Eusebius, *Commentaire*, 2a–b (27–29); J. Chrys., *In Gen. Hom.*, 3.2 (34).

21 *In Gen.*, 1. 6; Theoph., *Ad Aut.*, 2.13; Eusebius, *Commentaire*, 6d (35–37); J. Chrys., *In Gen. Hom.*, 4. 2–4 (41–43). But note that Eusebius’s argument in 6d (37) was earlier used by Chrysostom in *Hom.*, 2. 3 (29) on *Gen.*, 1.1 and by Eusebius 4d (31) on *Gen.*, 1.1–2.

22 *Gen.*, 1.1; Theoph., *Ad Aut.*, 2. 13; J. Chrys., *In Gen. Hom.*, 2. 3 (30).

23 *Gen.*, 1.11–12, 14–17; Theoph., *Ad Aut.*, 2.15; J. Chrys., *In Gen. Hom.*, 6. 3 (58–59).

24 *Gen.*, 1.26; Theoph., *Ad Aut.*, 2. 18; J. Chrys., *In Gen. Hom.*, 8.3 (72); Eusebius has not commented on this sentence.

25 Theoph., *Ad Aut.*, 2.15: “for the sun exists as the type of God and the moon as type of man... the great fish and carnivorous birds are in the likeness of greedy men and transgressors.” The first three days of creation are interpreted as types of the Trinity.

The exegetical writings of the succession of scriptural commentators of the School of Antioch have a great deal in common, but at the same time they are also strikingly different from one another because they were written in different circumstances and with different objectives. Theophilus's *Ad Autolyicum* is an Apology for Christianity, written in the age of persecutions. It also includes an explanation of Christian beliefs with emphasis on its monotheism, and attacks on the writings of pagan poets, historians, and philosophers. Eusebius of Emesa is above all interested in explaining passages that he thinks difficult.²⁶ Diodorus was concerned with providing material to be used by the Homoiousian clerics Flavianus and Meletius to refute the Homoians, who were in possession of the churches of Antioch in the 350s,²⁷ while Chrysostom's interests were those of a pastor.

The Mesopotamian Connection

Of the writers of the School of Antioch, Eusebius certainly,²⁸ and probably Theophylus,²⁹ were natives of Mesopotamia. Diodorus was an Antiochene, but we are told that he, together with Flavianus, introduced the antiphonal chanting of psalms, a Syriac practice, into the Greek liturgy of the church of Antioch.³⁰ Mesopotamian Christianity, which was centered on the city of Edessa,³¹ was

For other examples and a full discussion, see D.S. Wallace Hadrill, *Christian Antioch*, Cambridge, 1982, 43–45. For a discussion of the use of “types” in exegesis, see F.M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, Cambridge, 1997, 152–57.

26 Cf. L. van Rompay in Frishman and van Rompay, *The Book of Genesis*, 104–8.

27 Theodoret, *HE*, 4.23: “At the time he did not preach at services, but furnished an abundant supply of arguments and scriptural thoughts to preachers, who were thus able to aim their shafts at the blasphemy of Arius.” (tran. B. Jackson in *NPN* 3).

28 Sources on life: Socrates, *HE*, 1.24 and 2.9; Sozomen, *HE*, 3.6.1–7; R. B. Ter Haar Romeny, “The Use of Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac in Biblical Texts in Eusebius of Emesa’s Commentary on Genesis,” in *A Syrian in Greek Dress*, Louvain, 1997, 97–100; also “Eusebius of Emesa’s Commentary on Genesis and the Origins of the Antiochene School,” in Frishman and van Rompay, *The Book of Genesis*, 125–42; F. Millar, “Community, Religion, Language in the Middle Euphrates Zone in Late Antiquity,” *Scripta Classica Israelica* 27 (2008): 67–93.

29 Robert Grant, Theophilus, *Ad Autolyicum*, deduces a Mesopotamian origin from *Ad Aut.*, 2.24.

30 Theodoret, *HE*, 2.19; Nicetas, *PG*, 139, 1390; see M. Illert, *Johannes Chrysostomos und das antiochenisch-syrische Mönchtum*, Zurich/Freiburg, 2000, 73–74.

31 On the history of Edessa and its church, see *DACL* 4.2, 2058–2110, sv. *Edesse* (L.H. Leclercq, 1921); J. B. Segal, *Edessa the Blessed City*, Oxford, 1970, esp. 41–43, 100–104 on Jewish community; 62–82 on legends and facts about the coming of Christianity.

unique in that the language of its worshippers and services was Aramaic, the language actually spoken by Jesus, and in that it used an Aramaic version of the Hebrew Bible. It had independent traditions, and a strong Jewish influence, which is reflected in its Syriac translation of the Bible.³² Mesopotamian Christianity produced some notable writers using Syriac, notably the unorthodox Bardaisan (c. 154–222 CE), Aphraates (c. 270–345 CE), and, most famous of all, the poet Ephrem (c. 306–73 CE), a contemporary of Eusebius of Emesa.

Mesopotamia had its own version of the ascetic movement, which had developed independently around the cities of Edessa and Nisibis.³³ The ascetics were recognised as a group within the community. They were men and women who led some kind of consecrated life after having committed themselves to lifelong celibacy at their baptism. Their role was to be a model for the Christian community as a whole. Baptism was probably not restricted to men and women who were committed to lifelong celibacy, but celibacy probably remained the privileged route to salvation. Apart from these so-called *Ihidaye*, there was a more radical form of asceticism. The men who practised this lived in the desert or on mountain tops, and, unlike the Egyptian ascetics, they lived not in buildings but in the open or in caves. They surely served as a model for the “holy men” of Syria.³⁴

At the same time Mesopotamian Christianity was also influenced by the fact that the Church of Edessa was subordinated to that of Antioch,³⁵ and that Edessa's upper class and system of government were strongly Hellenised.³⁶ The Mesopotamian technique of Biblical exegesis, like that of the schools of Antioch and Alexandria, and indeed like that of Jewish exegesis,³⁷ was ultimately derived from that used by Greek grammarians to explain and interpret secular texts such as the poems of Homer,³⁸ and more recently by the Christian

32 S.P. Brock, “Jewish Traditions in Syriac Sources,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 30 (1979): 212–32. R. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians in the Mediterranean World from the Second Century to the Conversion of Constantine*, Harmondsworth, 1986, 277–80.

33 See S.B. Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World View of Ephrem the Syrian*, Kalamazoo, Mich., 1992, 131–32.

34 P. Escola, *Monachisme et église: Le monachisme Syrien du iv^e au vii^e siècle*, Paris, 1999.

35 R. Devréese, *Le patriarcat d'Antioche*, Paris, 1945.

36 F. Millar, “Greek and Syriac in Edessa and Osroene (CE 213–363),” *Scripta Classica Israelica* 32 (2011): 93–111; idem, “Greek and Syriac in Edessa: From Ephrem to Rabbula (CE 363–435),” *Semitica et Classica* 4 (2011): 99–113.

37 Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 91–94; R.P.C. Hanson, “Biblical Exegesis in the Early Church,” *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, Cambridge, 1975, 412–53, esp. 412–14.

38 C. Schäublin, *Untersuchungen zur Methode und Herkunft der antiochenischen Exegese*, Theophaneia 23, Cologne/Bonn, 1974, passim; Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 76–96.

exegesis of Origen and Eusebius of Caesarea,³⁹ but it also had marked local characteristics.

Mesopotamian exegesis is best known from Ephrem's exegesis of *Genesis*, which is, as indeed the whole of his theology, strongly focused on the unity of God. The object of Ephrem (c. 309–373) was evidently to counter the dualist theologies of Marcion and Mani, and the semi-Gnosticism of Bardesane, which had many followers in his native Edessa and in northern Syria.⁴⁰ This concern would explain Ephrem's distrust of allegory, and his emphasis on the literary meaning: allegorical interpretation could be used, and indeed was used, to read heretical interpretations into the strict monotheism of the Bible. The same concern probably explains his repeated insistence that God did not create the world out of preexisting matter.⁴¹

This need to combat Gnosticism and Marcionism, and hence the distrust of allegory, the insistence that God created matter out of nothing, and the strict monotheism, is shared by the writers of the School of Antioch. Theophilus of Antioch's exegesis of *Genesis*, which is not only the earliest exegesis of the School of Antioch, but the earliest surviving Christian exegesis of *Genesis*, focuses on the literal sense of the text, and again, like that of Ephrem, it is radically monotheistic. Again like Ephrem, Theophilus wrote a treatise—unfortunately now lost—against Marcion.⁴² Apart from this basic “family likeness”

39 On Syriac culture's threefold inheritance, Greek, Syriac, and Jewish, see S. Brock, “Syriac Culture, 337–425” ch. 23a, *CAH XIII*, Cambridge, 1998, 708–19, on 712–14; H.J.W. Drijvers, “Edessa und das jüdische Christentum,” *Vig. Christ* 24 (1970): 4–33.

40 Theodoret of Cyrrhus converts eight villages of Marcionites: *Ep.* 81; writes treatise against “the madness of Marcion”, *Ep.* 82. On Marcionites and Jews in Mesopotamia and northern Syria, see W. Bauer, *Rechtsgläubigkeit und Ketzerei*, Tübingen, 1964, 27; M. Tardieu, “Le Marcionisme syrien: Problèmes de géographie et d'ecclésiologie: 1. Arabie, 2. Cyrrestique,” *Annuaire du Collège de Franc* 8 (1997–98): 596–605; C.W. Mitchell, A.A. Bevan, and F. C. Burkitt (eds.), *St Ephraim's Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion and Bardaisan*, 2 vols., London, 1912 and 1921.

41 In Mathes, E.G., Amar, J., and McVey, K., *St Ephrem the Syrian*, selected loose works, tran. of Ephrem, *Commentary on Genesis*, Prologue 4, Section 1.2; 3.2; 5.1–2; 14; 15.1–2: insistence (against followers of Bardaisan, Marcionites, and Manichaeans) that matter did not pre-exist the creation; 1.1: rejection of all allegorical interpretations of the story of creation in six days; 7: rejection of the allegorical interpretation of the *wind* (or *spirit*) of God hovering over the face of the waters in Gen. 1.2 as meaning the Holy Spirit. He insists that wind is simply wind.

42 An example of Theophilus's emphasis on divine unity is that he interprets Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as God, the Word, and the Wisdom of God, i.e., as aspects of the Father rather than as distinct persons: *Ad Autolycum*, 1.7, 2.15. His treatise against Marcion: Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 4.24. Ephrem was to write against Marcion in Mesopotamia. See

of Antiochene and Syriac commentaries, their comments on at least some passages definitely seem related,⁴³ but as van Rompay has noted, the distance between Ephrem's commentary and the commentaries of the School of Antioch is nevertheless considerable.⁴⁴ A comparison of Ephrem's comments on the creation story with those of Eusebius of Emesa shows that they ask similar, but not identical questions.⁴⁵ It has been noted that although Ephrem was in heated debate with the Jews, he was well acquainted with Jewish aggadic traditions, and evidently had no scruples to make use of them in his commentaries on *Genesis* and *Exodus*,⁴⁶ something that the Antiochene commentators seem to have avoided. There was a strong Jewish community also at Antioch, whose influence Chrysostom considered dangerous.⁴⁷

The Antiochene and Syriac traditions of biblical exegesis were therefore not identical, but the similarities are sufficient to show that they are related, that the Antiochene school of biblical exegesis combined Greek traditions of Christian Antioch with Syriac traditions derived from Mesopotamia, and vice versa.⁴⁸ There were close social, commercial, and ecclesiastical links between

C.W. Mitchell (ed.), *Ephrem's Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion and Bardaisan*, text and translation, London, 1912.

- 43 For instance, Chrysostom and Ephrem agree on the incomprehensibility of God: Mathes, Amar, and McVey, *St Ephrem the Syrian*, 49, 53; and J. Chrys., *De incomprehensibili dei natura*, A.M. Malingrey and J. Danielou (eds.), S. Chr. 28², Paris, 1970. Both accept that Moses wrote *Genesis* and felt the need to explain why God told Moses about the creation: Ephrem, *Commentary on Genesis*, Prologue 1–2; J. Chrys., *In Gen (Hom. 2.2 [27–28])*.
- 44 Ter Haar Romeny, "Eusebius of Emesa's Commentary on Genesis and the Origins of the Antiochene School," in Frishman and van Rompay, *The Book of Genesis*, 113–23.
- 45 *Éusèbe de Émèse, Commentaire de la Genèse*, texte Arménien de l'édition de Venise 1980, fragments grecs et syriaques, avec traduction par F. Petit, L. van Rompay, J.S. Weitenberg, Louvain: Peeters, 2011, xxxvi, point out parallels in the interpretations of the Fall. Adequate discussion of the differences would require another paper.
- 46 Elena Narinskaya, *Ephrem: A "Jewish" Sage: A Comparison of the Exegetical Writings of St Ephrem, the Syrian and Jewish Traditions*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2010; Ter Haar Romeny, "Eusebius of Emesa's Commentary," 139–42; A. Kamesar, "The Evolution of the Narrative Aggada in Greek and Latin Patristic Literature," *J. Theol. St.*, n.s. 45 (1994): 37–71; *St Ephrem the Syrian*, 45, 62–63.
- 47 R.L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 1983; E. Soler, *Le sacré et le salut à Antioche au iv^e siècle apr. J.-C.*, Beirut, 2006, 93–135.
- 48 On Eusebius and Ephrem, see L. Van Rompay, "Quelques remarques sur la tradition syriaque de l'oeuvre exégétique de Théodore de Mopsueste," in H.J.W. Drijvers et al. (eds.), iv Symposium Syriacum 1984, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 229, Rome, 1987, 33–44, on 33–35.

Syria and Mesopotamia.⁴⁹ Even though Antioch had an extremely strong Hellenic identity, and not withstanding the fact that Theophilus produced his Apology with its commentary on *Genesis* at Antioch well before such writings began to be composed in Mesopotamia, Antiochene Christianity, including the character of the exegesis of the School of Antioch, seems nevertheless to have been influenced to a considerable extent by the Christianity of Mesopotamia.

Syriac Christianity certainly influenced Christianity at Antioch through the impact of the holy men living lives of extreme asceticism on the mountain behind the city. There is plenty of evidence that these men were admired and revered by men and women of all classes.⁵⁰ While Chrysostom preached to largely urban and Greek-speaking congregations, he could not fail to be aware that a great many of his listeners were enormously impressed by the holy men. Most of these hermits and monks were country folk and Syriac speakers, and their asceticism was the asceticism of Mesopotamia, or at least was at least strongly influenced by Mesopotamian asceticism.⁵¹ As a young man, Chrysostom had himself experienced a conversion to asceticism. On completing his rhetorical studies Chrysostom had rejected a promising secular career, attended classes at the ascetic school (*asceterion*) of Diodorus, and some time later became a monk on Mont Silpius, living in a monastery that was in fact a multiple hermitage, where he shared a cabin with another monk for no less than four years. After that he spent a further two years in a cave as a solitary hermit. Chrysostom therefore had experience of both the Antiochene asceticism of Diodorus and the Syriac asceticism of the Mountain.⁵² Subsequently, he rejected the ascetic

49 See Devr  esse, *Le patriarcat d'Antioche*. Eusebius, Bishop of Emesa; the controversial bishop of Antioch, Paul of Samosata; and probably also Theophilus were natives of Mesopotamia. The learned presbyter Lucian, martyred in 312, who had produced a new text of the Bible comparing the Greek LXX text with the Hebrew (Theodoret, *PG* 84, 29ff) and had opened an extremely influential school (*didaskaleion*) at Antioch may have been born at Samosata, but see G. Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria*, Princeton, 1961, 337 n. 86. He was certainly educated at Edessa (Suidas, sv. Λυκιανός).

50 A.J. Festug  re, *Antioche Pa  enne et Chr  tienne: Libanius, Chrysostome et les Moines de Syrie*, Paris, 1959, 245–406; R.M. Price, *A History of the Monks in Syria by Theodoret of Cyrrhus*, Kalamazoo, Mich., 1985.

51 For a compact account of Syriac asceticism, its extreme austerity, its claim that the truly Christian life must be celibate, and its tendency to literalize the symbolic language of the Bible, see *The Holy Women of the Syriac Orient*, translated with an introduction by Sebastian Brock and Susanna Ashbrook Harvey, Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1987, 7–12.

52 On Chrysostom's experience of asceticism, see W. Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose and John Chrysostom*, Oxford, 2011, 126–31.

life in favour of the priesthood, but the very high valuation of celibacy,⁵³ and the insistence on the reality of free will,⁵⁴ which are such prominent themes in his writings, are likely to have been derived at least in part from Syriac asceticism.⁵⁵

Martin Illert has pointed out an interesting instance of this influence.⁵⁶ In his commentary on the passage *Genesis* 3.7, which relates that it was only after they had eaten of the apple that Adam and Eve realized that they were naked, Chrysostom explains that they had not felt naked before because “the glory from above had garbed them better than any garment.” This heavenly garment had been snatched away from them when they sinned.⁵⁷ Illert has noted that here Chrysostom is alluding to an allegorical doctrine that Adam and Eve had lost garments of light together with their immortality as a punishment for eating the apple, a doctrine that is specifically Syriac.⁵⁸ While the religious application of the clothing metaphor had originated among the Jews, and had been applied in various different ways by Jews and Christians,⁵⁹ the application that Chrysostom had in mind was the Syriac version, found in the writings of Ephrem,⁶⁰ according to whom Adam and Eve had been clothed in a garment of glory while they were living in paradise, without sin. They were

53 Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose and John Chrysostom*, 152–58; Catherine Broc-Schmezer, *Les figures féminines du Nouveau Testament dans l'oeuvre de Jean Chrysostome*, Collection des Études Augustiennes, Série Antiquité 185, Turnhout, 2011.

54 As in *Hom. in Gen.*, 19.1; and A. Wenger, *Jean Chrysostome: Huit catéchèses baptismales inédites*, Sources Chr. 50², Paris, 1970, p.113; *cat.* I.10 with Wenger's n.1; and p. 190, *cat.* IV.14. Cf. Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose and John Chrysostom*, 194 and 269.

55 Sexual abstinence: P. Escola, *Monachisme et église: Le monachisme Syrien du iv^e au vii^e siècle*, Paris, 1999, 36–37, 67–69. Free will: *ibid.*, 65–66.

56 M. Illert, *Johannes Chrysostomus und das antiochenisch-syrische Mönchtum*, Zürich/Freiburg i. Br., 2000, is an extremely stimulating discussion of Mesopotamian elements in the ascetic doctrines of Chrysostom. More generally on the interaction between Syriac and Greek culture, see S.B. Brock, “Syriac Culture,” 714–19; also “Greek and Syriac in Late Antique Syria,” in A.K. Bowman and G. Woolf (eds.), *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*, Cambridge, 1994, 149–60.

57 *Hom. In Gen.*, 16. 5 (131); cf. *Hom. in Matth.*, 58.3; monks: compared to Adam when still clothed in glory; cf. also *Hom. in Matth.*, 59.2 (end)–59.3.

58 Illert, *Johannes Chrysostomus*, 74–75.

59 A. Toepel, “When Did Adam Wear Garments of Light?” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 61 (2010): 62–71: after the Fall (Jewish), before the fall (Christian).

60 S.P. Brock, “Clothing Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition,” in M. Schmidt (ed.), *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihre Parallelen im Mittelalter*, Eichstädter Beiträge 4, Regensburg, 1982, 11–40, on 11–13.

deprived of this garment as a consequence of their sin.⁶¹ But Jesus, as the second Adam, will one day restore to mankind the garment that Adam and Eve had lost, together with immortality.⁶²

To conclude, asceticism, as practised in Mesopotamia, influenced early Antiochene monasticism significantly.⁶³ Antioch was a cultural melting pot,⁶⁴ and cultural and religious influences traveled both to and from Mesopotamia. John Chrysostom and Theodoret⁶⁵ were in different ways influenced by the Syriac Christianity of Mesopotamia, but they nevertheless remained exponents of a Greek Christianity, and they wrote excellent Greek. Theodoret could deny the unique value of Greek culture, and its superiority over that of barbarians,⁶⁶ but he nevertheless wrote in Greek, addressed readers who had received a Greek education, and displayed familiarity with an extremely wide range of Greek authors.⁶⁷ In the first half of the fifth century, Greek culture was still dominant among intellectual Christians and pagans in Syria. This was to change, but only gradually.

The Theology of the School of Antioch under Attack

The Antiochene theologians insisted on the independent existence of the human element in the personality of Jesus. Their position can be seen to follow logically from their distrust of allegory, and their insistence that the gospel narrative must be accepted in its literal meaning. In the course of the fifth century the Two Nature theology of the School of Antioch met with passionate opposition, led by the patriarchs Cyril and Dioscorus of Alexandria. The ensuing

61 Ephrem, *Commentary on Genesis*, II. 10.3, 14.2, 21, in *St Ephrem the Syrian*, 54, 104, 106, 115. Tatian, the late-second-century-, and, according to *Ad Graecos* 4, "Assyrian," i.e., Mesopotamian, apologist already describes "immortality" metaphorically as the "garment of mortality" (*Oratio ad Graecos and Fragments*, ed. and tran. M. Whittaker, Oxford, 1982, 20.3).

62 Ephrem, *Commentary on Diatesseron*, 16.10.

63 Illert, *Johannes Chrysostomus*, 74–84; W. Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose and John Chrysostom*, 97–101.

64 Christine Kondoleon, *Antioch, the Lost Ancient City*, Princeton, 2000, 133–38, on the influence of Sasanian designs.

65 See Narinskaya, *Ephrem: A "Jewish" Sage*, 101–34.

66 Theodoret's, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* 1. 9–25; 5.58–64, 70–75, and in this volume, chapter xx.

67 From the beginning to the end of his *Graecarum affectionum curatio* Theodoret cites a very large number of passages from numerous Greek authors, some famous, some more obscure, in order to discredit the traditional Greek religion.

bitter dispute was essentially theological, though it also involved ecclesiastical power politics. But resentment of the predominance of the Greek language, or hostility to the Empire, were not what motivated any of the contestants, at least not in the early stages of the controversy. Rabbula, bishop of Edessa from 411–435, a scion of a leading and no doubt Greek-educated family of Chalcis in Syria, is said to have produced a Syriac text of the New Testament and to have translated from the Greek the *De recta fide* of Cyril of Alexandria.⁶⁸ In other words, this contemporary of Theodoret was eager to communicate with Syriac-speaking members of his community, but what he communicated was the theology not of Antioch, but of Alexandria.⁶⁹ This theology eventually brought into existence a parallel ecclesiastical Monophysite (Miaphysite) hierarchy, and eventually a number of Monophysite (Miaphysite) churches, most importantly the Syrian Orthodox Church, and, in Egypt, the Coptic Church.⁷⁰

The reasons for the widespread popularity of Monophysite theology in Syria are complex.⁷¹ The traditional monotheism of Mesopotamian and north Syrian Christianity⁷² may indeed be one factor that helped the One Nature theology to become predominant in Syria. That theology certainly appealed

68 G.W. Bowersock, "The Syriac Life of Rabbula and Syrian Hellenism," in T. Hägg and P. Rousseau (eds.), *Greek Biographies and Panegyrics in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley, 2000, 255–71, and "Chalcis ad Belum and Ansartha in Byzantine Syria," in *T.M.* 14, *Mélanges Dagron*, Paris, 2000, 47–55.

69 A.S.M. Schor, *Theodoret's People*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 2010, 96–97.

70 Neither "Monophysite" nor "Miaphysite" was a term used by the adherents of the One Nature theology to identify themselves. The former designation has until recently been the one used by scholars, but it was only introduced in the sixth century by an opponent of the sect. Miaphysite is a neologism of modern scholars that is much used today. See F. Millar, "The Evolution of the Syrian Orthodox Church in the Pre-Islamic Period: From Greek to Syriac?" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 21.1 (2013): 43–92, on 51–52.

71 The reasons why some regions turned to One-Nature Monophysitism while others did not—why for instance much of Syria One became Monophysite while Syria Two did not, or why Palestine turned from Monophysitism to "Melkite" orthodoxy—are not at all obvious. It was not the case that suppressed national or ethnic identities found expression in religious dissent (A.H.M. Jones, "Were the Ancient Heresies National or Social Movements in Disguise?" *JTS* n.s. 10 [1959]: 280–98), but rather that religious dissent eventually created new identities.

72 On the numerous seemingly monotheistic εἷς θεός inscriptions in northern Syria, see my "Problems Arising from the Conversion of Syria," in D. Baker (ed.), *The Church in Town and Countryside*, Oxford, 1979, 17–24, on 22–24, reprinted in my *From Diocletian to the Arab Conquest*, Aldershot: Variorum, 1990, Paper no. 1X.

to many ascetics and monks in northern Syria,⁷³ and hermits and monks had great influence on the population in their neighbourhood. So the presence of a dense network of rural village-based monasteries helped One Nature theology gain widespread support in Syria I, but why not in Syria II?⁷⁴ Antioch itself never became a Monophysite city. The Monophysite patriarchs of Antioch resided not in the city itself but in a rural monastery.⁷⁵

The Monophysite Church Acquires a Linguistic, Syriac Identity

While Syriac was probably the first, and in many cases the only language of the country folk, this by itself was not enough to make the individuals who had opted for a Monophysite theology create a separate church with a Syriac liturgy. Monophysites were originally opposed neither to the imperial government nor to the Greek language. Even though it eventually became the predominant theology in regions where Syriac or other vernacular varieties of Aramaic or Coptic were still spoken by a large part of the population,⁷⁶ the One Nature theology also appealed to Greeks, including highly educated Greeks, all over the East. By 566 Monophysite bishops had been consecrated even for thoroughly Greek cities like Aphrodisias, Smirna, and Ephesus.⁷⁷ Severus, the famous Monophysite bishop of Antioch (512–519), was a native of Sozopolis in Pisidia, had studied philosophy at Alexandria and Roman law at Beirut, and nevertheless was in his time the most active leader of the Monophysites.⁷⁸

73 On the influence of monks and hermits: see my 'Problems Arising from the Conversion of Syria,' in *The Church in Town and Countryside*, ed. D. Baker, Studies in Church History 16, Blackwell 1979, 17–24, esp. 18–19, 20–21 (also published in W. Liebeschuetz, *From Diocletian to the Arabic Conquest*, Aldershot 1990, Paper no 1X). Also W. Liebeschuetz with H. Kennedy, "Antioch and the Villages of Northern Syria," in *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 33 (1988): 65–90, on 73–76 (paper xvi in Liebeschuetz, *From Diocletian to the Arab Conquest*).

74 W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, Cambridge, 1972, 88–91, 139–40, 294–95; Liebeschuetz, "Antioch and the Villages," 65–90, on 81–82.

75 Liebeschuetz, "Antioch and the Villages," 82–84; E. Honigsmann, *Le Couvent de Barsauma et le Patriarcat Jacobite d'Antioche et de Syrie*, Louvain, 1954, 20 and 52–53.

76 E. Honigsmann, *Le Couvent de Barsaumas*, map 2 (CE 512–18), map 3 (CE 793–1199).

77 W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, 293.

78 Pauline Allen and Robert Hayward, *Severus of Antioch*, London: Routledge, 2010; Frédéric Alpi, *La route royale: Sévère d'Antioche, 512–18*, 2 vols., Beirut, 2010.

In those years the emperor Anastasius actually favoured the Monophysites,⁷⁹ but for a long time after both Monophysites and emperors hoped, at least intermittently, that a compromise could be negotiated.⁸⁰

It was only reluctantly and as a reaction to intermittent persecution that clerics who refused to recognize the validity of the creed of the Council of Chalcedon of AD 451 began, a hundred years later, to create a separate ecclesiastical hierarchy. And even then they did this with the support of the empress Theodora, while the emperor Justinian evidently turned a blind eye.⁸¹ Emancipation from Greek was a gradual process.⁸² Over the years Monophysite clergy were building up a Syriac literature made up of translated works of secular Greek philosophy, works of Christian theology originally written in Greek, and works of history seen from a Monophysite point of view.⁸³ But the new "Syrian orthodox Church" only became fully associated with the Syriac language, that is it only acquired a Syriac linguistic identity, after the Arab conquest, when Syria and Mesopotamia were under Arab rule, and to some extent isolated from the Greek world.⁸⁴ Even after all hopes of a compromise had come to an end, the Monophysites did not become active enemies of the Empire, though the Persians and the later the Arabs could trust the Monophysite hierarchy and work with it in a way they could not work with the hierarchy of the Chalcedonian Melkite Church.⁸⁵ It is surely also significant in some way or

79 John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, tran. E. W. Brooks, *Patrologia Orientalis* 19 (1926): 153–54; E. Honigmann, *Évêques et Évêchés Monophysites d'Asie*, CSCO 127, Subsidia 2, Louvain, 1951, 158–77.

80 See Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, 255–95.

81 George Tate, *Justinien: L'épopée de l'empire*, 527–65, Paris, 2004, 690–93.

82 F. Millar, "Ethnic Identity in the Near East, 325–450: Language, Religion and Culture," *Mediterranean Archaeology* 11 (1998): 159–76.

83 The development of this literature is surveyed by Fergus Millar, "The Evolution of the Syrian Orthodox Church in the Pre-Islamic Period: from Greek to Syriac?," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 21.1 (2013): 43–92; see also Philip Wood (ed.), *History and Identity in the Late Antique Near East*, Oxford, 2013, especially his, "Why Were the Syrians Interested in Greek Philosophy?" *ibid.*, 61–81; and with a different interpretation: J. Tannous, "You Are What You Read: Qenneshre and the Miaphysite Church in the Seventh Century," *ibid.*, 83–102; also P. Wood, *"We Have No King but Christ": Christian Political Thought in Greater Syria on the Eve of the Arab Conquest (c. 400–585)*, Oxford, 2010.

84 Bas ter Haar Romeny, "Ethnicity, Ethnogenesis and the Identity of Syriac Orthodox Christians," in Walter Pohl, Clemens Gantner, and Richard Payne, *Visions of Community in the Post-Roman World: The West, Byzantium and the Islamic World, 300–190*, Farnham, 2011, 183–204. Also see essays in H. Cotton and D. Wasserstein (eds.), *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East*, Cambridge, 2009.

85 W. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, pp. 335–38, 356–37.

other that Christian communities in Nubia, Ethiopia, and Armenia, kingdoms beyond the boundaries of the Empire, ended up as Monophysites,⁸⁶ while the Christian Church in Sasanian Persia, a kingdom perennially hostile to the Empire, adopted a theology that both Melkites and Monophysites within the Empire condemned as “Nestorian.”⁸⁷

It was evidently only the imperial government’s intermittent persecution of clerics who refused to accept the creed as defined by the Council of Chalcedon that drove the Monophysites first to become a separate church, and eventually to distance themselves from the emperor’s government and the Greek language of his administration. The Syrian Orthodox Christians’ development into a community was completed under Islamic rule, where society was organized into religious communities, and the “personality of law,” the complex of laws regulating the condition and status of individuals, was based on their religion.⁸⁸ If we look at this development in a wider historical perspective, however, we can recognize a long-term trend amounting to a gradual reversal of the Hellenisation of the Near East, with a reemergence into prominence of the ancient Near Eastern languages Aramaic and Coptic, a trend culminating in the Arab conquest and Islamization.

86 Ibid., 296–315.

87 S.P. Brock, “‘Nestorian Church’: A Lamentable Misnomer,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 78 (1996): 23–53.

88 Michael Morony, “Religious Community in the Early Islamic World,” in *Visions of Community in the Post-Roman World*, 155–64.

The Balkans: A Contrast



The Lower Danube Region under Pressure: From Valens to Heraclius

The Fourth Century

By the fourth century the region was well urbanised.¹ As happened elsewhere, forts of the early days of the Empire had acquired civilian populations and developed into cities. Sirmium, Singidunum, Viminacium, Ratiaria, and Durostorum were perhaps the most important cities situated on the river itself, while inland, on one of the principal routes across the Haemus mountains to the Danube, was Nicopolis ad Istrum. On the southern side of the mountains further east was the important strategically situated city of Marcianopolis. These cities displayed the usual markers of Roman city organization: a geometrical street plan, a monumental forum, large town houses, and temples, which in the fourth century were being replaced by churches. Nicopolis ad Istrum can be regarded as typical.² The countryside too was strongly Romanized. Archaeologists have found numerous villas and settlements.³

The cities were massively fortified.⁴ The army was dispersed in cities and forts, large and small, along the Danube.⁵ The *Notitia Dignitatum* (*ND*) has preserved for us the distribution of the units.⁶ This system was strong enough to maintain control of the Danube frontier and to keep out small bands of marauders. The frontier army was able to control who came in or went out of the Empire. Large-scale invasions, involving thousands, required intervention

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1 Dinchev 1999a, 39–73.

2 See L. Slokoska 2007.

3 Freeman, Bennek, Fiema and Hoffmann 2002, 629–74; Conrad and Stancev 2002, esp. Fig. 3, 681.

4 Poulter 1992, 99–133, relevant 116–17; Scorpan 1980.

5 Ivanov 1995, 468–640. The units were more numerous and smaller than under the early Empire.

6 Hoffmann 1970, vol. 2, 151–2 n. 323 argues that the lists of Danube units are on the whole pre-Valentinian I. But Zahariade 1988, 21–7, 181–5, 192 argues for the last decade of fourth century at the earliest.

by the mobile field army. In 376, the Goths had to ask permission to enter the Empire and were then admitted with the cooperation of the Roman army.⁷ Cooperation soon turned to hostility with disastrous results, not only for the local troops, but also for the eastern field army that had come to their assistance. But the provinces on the lower Danube had enjoyed peace since 332. The region had enjoyed a golden age.⁸

The Goths

The process which transformed this golden age into an age of iron was set in motion when the Goths broke loose, defeating first the local defence forces, and then going on to destroy the emperor Valens and the eastern field army in the battle of Adrianople in 378. The Goths ranged freely and did great damage. They destroyed many of the forts of the defence line described in the *ND*,⁹ though they appear to have captured few cities, and none of the major ones.¹⁰ In the following period the control of the Danube line seems to have depended largely on barbarian federates settled there, first of all the Visigoths themselves. Where precisely they were settled is uncertain: the sources are remarkably vague.¹¹ Subsequently other groups of barbarians were settled along the Danube and in Thrace.¹² They were always settled as federates with some obligation to serve the Empire as soldiers. One imagines that the 'watch on the Danube' was largely in their hands. Meanwhile the cities remained intact, though their prosperity must have been affected by the devastation of the countryside. Most of them now acquired bishops.¹³

7 Ammianus Marcellinus 31.41–5.

8 This comes out very clearly in the potted surveys of the growth of numerous cities, in Dinchev 1999a, 39–73.

9 Scorpan 1980, 122 sums up damage to forts in Scythia Minor.

10 Augustae was destroyed during this period: Ivanov 1997, 31–4, 95–8; so too Deultum, see Balabanov and Petrova 2002, 237–50.

11 Themistius *Or.* 16.18 (211a): Thrace; *Or.* 34.24: Macedonia and Thrace? *Or.* 16 and 34 are translated with introduction and notes in Heather and Moncur 2001, 255–83 and 304–33. Settlement along the Danube is suggested by Zosimus 4.34.5. On questions of settlement, see Heather 1991, 159.

12 Heather 1991, 257.

13 Poulter 1999, 347–58, esp. 350. Bishops: Dinchev 2000, 65–84, esp. 77–8.

Iatrus and Dichin

Two excavations which played a prominent part in the recent conference are highly relevant to any assessment of conditions on the lower Danube in the late fourth and early fifth century. Iatrus, which started as a straightforward Roman fort, seems to have been transformed by distinct stages into a fortified civilian settlement. What had been the headquarters buildings and other structures characteristic of forts of the regular Roman army went out of use. Farm-like buildings were built into the remains of the *principia* and *praetorium*. Metalwork and pottery found inside the fort suggest that its inhabitants now included federates from north of the Danube. Iatrus now also benefited from two granaries (or possibly only a single large one).¹⁴ These are the kind of changes which one would expect to have occurred as a result of the Gothic war. Federates would have taken over defence duties from regular troops. In generally less secure conditions it might no longer have been safe to store the local harvest in the countryside. It might even have become necessary to build granaries on the Danube for corn imported from elsewhere in the Empire because the devastated countryside could no longer feed both the garrison¹⁵ and the local population. We know that the fourth-century settlement pattern no longer existed in the sixth century.¹⁶ Had it already been destroyed by the Goths in the late fourth century, and not later in the fifth by Huns and Goths, as is often assumed? The excavators think that the crucial transformation at Iatrus took place before the Gothic war. But unfortunately there is as yet no agreement over the dating of the successive stages in the evolution of that fortified site.¹⁷ Clearly questions remain to be answered.¹⁸

The evidence for Dichin is less ambiguous. This fortified settlement was definitely built in the early fifth century. The strength and quality of the fortifications and the orderly arrangement of the internal buildings suggest that this was a fort built by the imperial government, and not simply a fortified village.

14 *Iatrus-Krivina* 1995, and more recently, von Bülow, 2003, 663–9. Dinchev 1999b, 165–74 argues that one of the buildings was a barrack.

15 Zosimus 4.10: Corn had to be imported for a large campaigning army even in the fourth century.

16 Fig. 4, in Conrad and Stancev 2002 and Poulter 2007, Chapter 22, Poulter 2007, 583–04 (field survey).

17 It is the case that the transformation of army camps into fortified settlements housing both soldiers and civilians was an almost standard development in the fourth century in this area. See survey of cities in Dinchev 1999a.

18 Dinchev 1999a, and Vagalinski 2003, 43–82, arguing on the basis of the stratigraphy of Structure XLIV that the crucial transformation took place in the first decade of the fifth century. See also Mackensen 1991, 79–96.

As at Iatrus, pottery finds indicate that at least some of the inhabitants came from across the Danube, and may thus well have been federates.¹⁹ One striking feature of the fort is its granaries. Amphorae were discovered there which were used to import foodstuffs from other parts of the Empire. However, there is also evidence that the fort itself had become a centre of agricultural production. As it looks as if the fort was occupied by troops, it is tempting to conclude that they were federate Goths and their families.

The Huns

The accommodation the Empire had reached with the Goths did not give permanent peace to the lower Danube. In 441 and 447–8 the Huns overran the area with calamitous results. We are well, though incompletely, informed about these events. Priscus' *History* is a contemporary account, but it has come down to us in fragments. The Huns were mounted nomads with the ability to capture cities. They did enormous damage. Attila seems to have adopted a strategy of destroying cities, breaching the walls, burning the buildings and enslaving the population.²⁰ The objective was presumably twofold: to prevent the cities from serving as border fortresses; and to make money by selling the captives. Attila does not appear to have been interested in permanent occupation of territory, or in obtaining land for settlement. In this respect he was a forerunner of the next wave of tribes threatening the Danube frontier, Antes, Sclavenes and Avars, all of whom were to do great damage to the Balkan provinces without seeking to take permanent control of the territories that they had devastated. The Huns captured Constantia in Moesia Superior in retaliation for alleged tomb-robbery by the bishop of Margus. This bishop later fled to the Huns and betrayed his city to them. The Huns crossed a river, attacked Viminacium, and probably destroyed it. They captured Margus and devastated it. Then they besieged Naissus, with siege machinery. 'The men from the town'²¹ dared not meet the Huns in the field.²² The city was captured and was emptied of inhabitants except for some invalids in a church hostel, as Priscus was

19 See V.G. Swan, in Poulter 2007, 251–289.

20 The number of cities destroyed was certainly much larger than those mentioned in the fragments of Priscus. Archaeology suggests that it included Serdica and Nicopolis ad Istrum.

21 Were they civilians or soldiers? Blockley translates 'garrison'. But the men are in 9.3(54) described as 'the Asemuntians'.

22 Priscus fr. 6.1–2.

to see for himself.²³ In AD 447 war broke out once more. Attila captured and sacked Ratiaria, Philippopolis, and Arcadiopolis, and carried off a great deal of plunder and many prisoners. Only Asemus resisted successfully. 'The men inhabiting the place' met the Huns in the field, and later ambushed them and deprived them of booty and prisoners.²⁴ For the peace settlement, the Empire paid the Huns a large amount of gold, and in addition agreed to leave a strip of land five days' journey wide, stretching from Pannonia in the west to a line from Novae on the Danube to Naissus in the province of Dacia Mediterranea, as a kind of no-man's land between the two empires.²⁵

The death of Attila and the disintegration of his empire did not mean that peace returned to the Danube provinces. Two competing groups of Gothic federates were operating in the territory, and the imperial government was quite happy to see them fight each other, irrespective of the suffering their wars inflicted on the Roman provincials.²⁶ For the duration of this internecine struggle, Theoderic, the Amal, made Novae his headquarters (475–88), and the rebuilding of that city, including the construction of a large basilica, may have been begun by him.²⁷ By now the whole region was in a very bad way.

Reconstruction

Reconstruction was slow. At Nicopolis ad Istrum and in some other places in Moesia II it may have begun as early as the late 450s,²⁸ elsewhere it seems only to have taken place in the reigns of Anastasius (491–518),²⁹ and above all Justinian (527–65). We have a detailed account of Justinian's work in *The Buildings* (*De Aedificiis*) of Procopius.³⁰ Procopius credits Justinian with either building from scratch or restoring hundreds of fortresses in the Balkan area.³¹

23 Priscus fr. 11.2.

24 Priscus fr. 9. 3(40–54).

25 Priscus fr. 11.1.

26 P. Heather in Poulter 2007, 163–190.

27 See Kalinowski 2002, 184–6.

28 Poulter 1995, 35–7; and 43–4. Poulter notes a change in diet compared with the fourth century. Millet appears to have replaced bread wheat, barley and rye as the staple cereal, which suggests a decline in large-scale wheat cultivation.

29 G. von Bülow, *Iatrus-Krivina* 1995, 56: Iatrus, Dinogetia, Histria, Ratiaria.

30 On Procopius' *Buildings* see *Antiquité Tardive* 8 (2000), 8–180, 'Le de Aedificiis de Procope: le texte et les réalités documentaires', with chapters by various authors. On Balkans see Michael Whitby 1988a, 71–5.

31 For numbers and geographical distribution see Curta 2001, 156 Fig. 6.

But the reader of *The Buildings* is faced with many problems. Many of the 600 or so fortified settlements mentioned by Procopius cannot be located with certainty. Then, *The Buildings* is a panegyric work, and Procopius certainly attributed to the emperor structures that were built in his reign, but without imperial participation.³² He also credits Justinian with work which we know to have been carried out by his predecessors.³³ It is likely that many of these problems will eventually be solved by excavation, but at the moment the contribution of archaeology is still very limited.

Procopius first gives a detailed description of Justinian's work of fortifications along the Danube from west to east,³⁴ and later provides lists of fortifications by province.³⁵ His account starts with Moesia Prima. We are told that Singidunum, which had been razed to the ground and deprived of inhabitants, was restored by Justinian;³⁶ so was Viminacium (4.5.11.5). He strengthened Cupi (Cuppae) and Novae,³⁷ where he also built a powerful fort on the opposite side of the Danube. Further down the river he restored the fortifications of Bononia and Novae, and did a lot of rebuilding at Ratiaria. He restored the ruined city of Augustae, and fortified Valeriana which had previously been unfortified. Procopius also lists numerous forts situated between the larger cities, some of which are not easy to locate. He then goes on to treat in the same way the fortifications of Moesia Secunda³⁸ and Scythia Minor.³⁹ Procopius' account shows that Justinian tried to restore the line of frontier forts, and to create once more a *limes* like the one that had existed before the Gothic invasion, and so to make it more difficult for barbarians to cross the Danube. But he also was very much concerned to safeguard the inhabitants of a very large number of places, big and small, away from the frontier by providing towns and villages with effective fortifications. 'And in all parts of Thrace he established countless fortresses, by which he has now made entirely free from devastation a land which formerly lay exposed to the inroads of the enemy.'⁴⁰ The tacit assumption behind such massive strengthening of fortifications several days' march from the frontier is that large-scale raiding across the Danube could not

32 This is also the practice of Malalas discussed by Downey 1938, 1–15, 299–311.

33 See Whitby 1988a, 717–35; also Gregory 2000, 115–114, esp. 111–12 on the dating of the Isthmus wall.

34 Proc. *Aed.* 4.5.9–4.6.34.

35 Proc. *Aed.* 4.11.

36 Proc. *Aed.* 4.5.11.

37 The western Novae, not the city of Theoderic.

38 Proc. *Aed.* 4.7.1–14.

39 Proc. *Aed.* 4.7.15–21.

40 Proc. *Aed.* 4.11.20.

be stopped, and that raiders could not even be prevented from penetrating to the neighbourhood of the capital.⁴¹ The narrative of Procopius' *History* shows that that was indeed the case, as we will see.

Procopius is certainly right to maintain that Justinian had a programme for the defence of the Balkans. We know that a high official⁴² called Victorinos was in charge of an extensive programme of fortification. This official is mentioned on four inscriptions from Byllis in Nova Epirus. One of them tells us that fortifications were also built under the supervision of Victorinos, on the orders of Justinian, in Moesia, Scythia, Illyricum, and Thrace. Another inscription shows that Victorinos was also active on the isthmus of Corinth. We know that Justinian tried to reorganize the administrative structure of the area. He built up a small settlement into the city of Justiniana Prima, and he did this not only because it was his birthplace, but also because he wanted the headquarters of the praetorian prefect of Illyricum to be situated close to the frontier.⁴³ Justinian created the command of the so-called *quaestor exercitus*, which united the supervision of Caria, Cyprus, and the Cycladic islands with that of the Danubian provinces of Moesia and Scythia.⁴⁴ This peculiar grouping of provinces could be explained as intended to facilitate the provision of food, especially of corn, to the troops along the frontier with food, when crops could no longer be grown locally because farms had been devastated, and farmers working in the fields were no longer safe.⁴⁵

41 Maurice, *Strategikon* (tr. G.T. Dennis) 10.2 goes as far as to recommend that there should be no attempt to stop a large invading force: 'If an enemy force superior in strength or even equal to ours invades our country, we must be sure not to engage in pitched battle. We should instead lay ambushes by day or by night, block the route it is taking, destroy supplies along its line of march. If there is to be an attack, it is more effective to make it as the enemy is returning and leaving our country, when they are encumbered with plunder, tired out, and getting closer to their own people . . . It is most important to keep the army unharmed and intact. By our concentrating on this, the enemy will not find it easy to besiege the fortifications, or to disperse his forces to ravage the country, for he will be under observation, and will have to reckon with a concentrated army.'

42 A general? (στρατηγική φύσις).

43 See C. Bavant in Poulter 2007, 337–74. It is doubtful whether the prefecture was ever transferred. Archaeologists have not found a building that might have been the prefect's headquarters.

44 Nov. 41 of 536, Lydus *De Mag.* 2.27–8. Curta 2002, 9–26.

45 Malchus fr. 20 line 200: Dardania without population; Nov. 11: devastation of countryside (*Attilaris temporibus eiusdem locis devastatis*) had led to the transfer of the prefecture from Sirmium to Thessalonica.

Justinian undoubtedly did have a frontier strategy, but it is certain that Procopius very much exaggerates his personal involvement in the building of fortifications. Work ordered by the emperor was not necessarily supervised by his officials, or paid for out of imperial resources. Presumably, he could simply command local landowners to build fortifications, as we know Theoderic to have done in Italy.⁴⁶

In fact, archaeological study of the very numerous hill forts in our area suggests that the building of largish fortified hill settlements began as early as the beginning of the fifth century, if not before.⁴⁷ Fortification of small settlements covering 1 ha or less, became common only after 500, but still well before the accession of Justinian. Presumably fortifications were often built by and for the local population with slight, or even without any, participation of the emperor or his officials. Some forts were sited strategically on likely invasion routes, on the approaches to mountain passes, or bridges, or protecting mining areas.⁴⁸ But others do not appear to have been part of any coherent strategic plan.⁴⁹ After all, the appearance of fortified sites in inaccessible places, defended by their natural position, is a phenomenon to be observed in many parts of the late Empire, from the Syrian desert fringe to Spain.⁵⁰ The precise manner in which these sometimes quite well-built fortifications came into being is rarely known. There is wide room for speculation. In some cases, the imperial governor could have ordered provincials to build hill refuges for themselves. Sometimes local notables may well have organized and financed the local hill fort on their own initiative. But one thing is overwhelmingly likely: the development was a response to growing insecurity. If hill forts were safer, they were surely also very inconvenient, for they meant that the peasant lived further from his fields.⁵¹ So people will only have moved uphill if they had to. Hill settlements differed very much in size from 5.7 ha to 0.03 ha.⁵² But Zikideva on its rocky crest 252 m above sea level near the present day town of Veliko Turnovo,

46 Cassiodorus *Variae* 1.17; III.48.1; V.9.

47 Dinchev 1997a, 47–63; and a more systematic account of different types of fortified non-urban settlements, and the chronology of their construction, in idem 2001, 217–35. See also Chapter 19, Dinchev in Poulter 2007, 479–546.

48 Werner 1986, 561–4.

49 There is need for a systematic study, indeed for a number of regional studies.

50 Dunn 1994, 60–80; idem 1997, 136–50; idem 2004, 535–865. In Albania the fortified hill settlements appear from the fourth century: Saradi 1998, 81–130, relevant 115–16.

51 Some of the hill forts may well have been refuges where the country folk retreated when they were threatened by invaders. But many were certainly inhabited permanently, even densely so.

52 According to the table of forts in Curta 2001, 183 (Table 7).

and not far from the Roman city of Nicopolis ad Istrum, covers as much as 21.4 ha. When Nicopolis, down in the valley of the Rositsa was itself rebuilt after destruction by the Huns, it was reconstructed as a compact military and religious centre of 6 ha. It looks as though the fortified settlement on Tsarevets Hill replaced Nicopolis as the principal regional centre of population.⁵³

Cities, Settlements and Forts: Progressive Convergence

Among the fortified sites described or listed by Procopius some are described as a 'city' (πόλις), others as a 'fort' (φρούριον, ὀχύρωμα) or simply a locality (χωρίον). What was the difference between them? We still know very little about the layout and appearance of the cities along the Danube in the sixth century. In a few cases excavation has shown that the rebuilding of what had been a city, or the building of a new city, did not involve the rebuilding of a classical city with forum and civic buildings and a large population. The rebuilt Nicopolis ad Istrum was essentially a fortified centre of secular and military administration, containing administrative buildings, barracks, storehouses and churches, but few houses for the ordinary population. The same was true of the largely new Justiniana Prima, as was shown by Bernard Bavant⁵⁴ These two cities also lack the civic structures, such as forum, baths, and council chamber, which had characterized the classical city. In plan and appearance cities no longer differed essentially from non-cities. A settlement like Zidikeva was certainly larger both in area and in population than many a sixth-century city. What then did distinguish cities from settlements which were not entitled to the title?⁵⁵

In the Roman Empire the essential qualification for city status was the grant of *ius civitatis* by the emperor.⁵⁶ We have evidence of the procedure in a series of inscribed letters concerning the conferment of *ius civitatis* on the city of Orcistus by Constantine (AD 325).⁵⁷ The practical consequence of the grant

53 Dinchev 1997b, 54–77.

54 B. Bavant in Poulter, *Transition to Late Antiquity* (2007, 337–74. Tropaeum Trajani was similarly a fortress and ecclesiastical centre of c.10.5 ha, without civic buildings. It had four large churches of the sixth century, a *horreum* converted into a market, but not much housing (Poulter 1992, 116–17).

55 On the concept of city in the sources of the sixth and seventh centuries, see Brandes 1989, 28–43.

56 *Castron into polis* through δίκαιον πόλεως; Malalas 302.22–303.2.

57 Dessau *ILS* 6091. See also Dessau 6090 (city rights of Tymandus). Mitrev and Tarakov (2002), 25–32: Maximinus Dia and Galerius grant *ius civitatis* to Heracleia Sintica on the

was that after obtaining city status a settlement could no longer be subject to another city. Henceforth, it would not be required to pay local taxes to a superior neighbour, as Orcistus, before it received city status, had paid local tax to Nicoleia. But the new city was still subject to the imperial government, and it was therefore a condition for the grant of city status that the place should have, or be able to establish,⁵⁸ a local senate, that is a civic council or curia, to which the imperial government could delegate essential administrative tasks, not least the invidious duty of collecting imperial taxes. So city status was a traditional honour, which, however, also involved considerable burdens and responsibilities.

As we have seen *Ius civitatis* was still awarded in the sixth century,⁵⁹ and the distinction between settlements that had it and those that did not was maintained, but in practice the dividing line was becoming blurred. *Nov.* 28, listing cities of the province of Helenopontus, refers to Leontopolis as a settlement that ought to be numbered among cities, and comments that Pityon and Sebastopolis ought to be counted as forts rather than cities.⁶⁰ In his narrative chapters Procopius is on the whole consistent in describing some settlements as cities and others by different designations,⁶¹ but in his bare lists of 'fortresses' he does not distinguish those with city status.⁶² Nevertheless, the distinction between settlements which have city status and those which have not was still observed by Theophylact, writing in the early seventh century.

Good reasons can be suggested why the distinction was becoming blurred. The traditional city had a curia and decurions. These were needed for local administration as well as for collecting taxes and other duties imposed by the government. In the sixth century, while many cities still had councils and decurions,⁶³ not all cities had them, and we certainly hear very little of councils

Struma river in south-west Bulgaria. The procedure was still carried out in Justinian's days: *Proc. Aed.* 4.6.1–3 (ὁχυρώματα given πόλεων 'αξιώματα'); 4.11.7–8 (κώμη turned into city); 4.9.17–20 (χωρίον into πόλις).

58 Sometimes the emperor transferred *curiales* from an existing city to a settlement he wished to promote to city status.

59 So also Malalas 444.20ff (Anasartha); the Troullan Council of 692 (Mansi 11.960.38) decreed that if the emperor founds or refounds a city the ecclesiastical status will follow the civic status.

60 *Nov.* 28 *praef.*

61 See examples in Curta 2001, 122–3.

62 So Nicopolis ad Istrum and other places known to have been cities are listed among φρούρια without any reference to its πόλις status: *Aed.* 11.20 (p. 313 in Loeb edition).

63 Laniado, 2002, 75–87.

and councilors in the cities along the Danube in the fourth century, or after.⁶⁴ We are entering the period of 'post-curial government'.⁶⁵ This would account for the absence of civic buildings in the cities rebuilt by Justinian.⁶⁶ All cities whether old or newly established were required to have a bishop, but an exception was made for cities under the bishop of Tomis, in Scythia Minor, because the churches in these small cities exposed to barbarian incursions needed the support of the church at Tomis to survive.⁶⁷ At that time the territories of the cities of the Balkan provinces were very large. Their administrative tasks must have always been difficult. In the circumstances of chronic danger of raids and invasion that existed for most of the sixth century, administration of these huge territories must have become almost impossible. One imagines that alternative arrangements were made which involved the devolution of the cities' administrative functions to smaller localities in their territory.⁶⁸ But, if there was such delegation, we have practically no evidence of how it functioned.

The Sclavenes Test Justinian's Defences

There can be no doubt that the widespread fortification of settlements was a reaction to the plundering raids across the Danube, which were very numerous indeed. From the beginning of the sixth century the Balkan provinces of the Roman Empire were under pressure from bands of raiders crossing the Danube emerging from what are now the Russian plains. Various peoples were involved: Huns, Bulgars, Gepids, Antes, Cotrigurs, and from around the 520s Sclavenes, and after 574 the Avars.⁶⁹

Of these, the most persistent and in the long run the most difficult for the Empire to cope with were the Sclavenes and the Avars. The Sclavenes, who were settled to the north of the lower Danube, had become a serious threat to

64 But every city had a bishop (CJ 1.3.35, a law of Zeno of 474–91: *πάσαν πόλιν... ἔχειν ἀχώριστον καὶ ἴδιον ἐπίσκοπον θεσπίζομεν*, and eventually it was possession of a Bishop rather than of *ius civitatis* that provided the legal definition of a city.

65 Liebeschuetz 2001, esp. 110–20, although none of the evidence comes from the lower Danube provinces.

66 Dinchev 1999a, 61–2.

67 CJ 1.3.35.

68 Dunn 2002, 705–17; idem 1994, 60–80. Evidence for what look like headquarters buildings in a few larger non-urban fortified settlements, see Dinchev 2001, 221–24. Churches and ecclesiastical centres are much more common and widespread than headquarter buildings.

69 See the list in Curta 2001, 116–17.

the peace of the provinces south of Danube. Where they came from and why they emerged into history just then, is still a problem.⁷⁰ The Sclavenes were not subject to a single ruler. They lacked a central monarchy, but large numbers of them could be organized by individual leaders into formidable fighting bands.⁷¹ They were already very numerous when we first hear of them early in the reign of Justinian,⁷² and they would eventually spread over the whole of Eastern Europe. How they did this is another mystery.⁷³ The Sclavenes must have had a core of shared values in order to maintain social cohesion, for their operations were on a very much larger scale than just family-organized activity. Furthermore, if they owed their ethnic name of Sclavenes to the Romans, as it is fashionable to maintain, the Romans must have thought that they had some conspicuous shared characteristics. After all, the Sclavenes are only one of the numerous tribes named in Roman accounts of these Balkan events. The Romans must have had reasons for making these tribal distinctions. It is certainly not true that 'to our sixth century authors ethnicity was an instrument to differentiate between enemies and allies'.⁷⁴ The Sclavenes of the sixth century may not be distinguishable archaeologically, but to contemporaries they were evidently quite easy to distinguish from Cotrigurs, Utrigurs, and Avars, and they were also distinguishable from Antes, even though Antes were more like them than the other peoples.

The Antes are said to have been kinsmen of the Sclavenes but they had a more formal organization, so that imperial government could establish treaty relationships with them,⁷⁵ which it seems to have been unable to do with the Sclavenes. The earliest raid by Antes is recorded around 517.⁷⁶ There was extensive raiding by Sclavenes in the 520s and later 530s.⁷⁷ In 536, the Gepids captured Sirmium.⁷⁸ In 539, the Huns crossed the Danube and divided their

70 See the sensible discussion in Barford 2001, 27–55.

71 See Urbanczyk 2002, 257–68.

72 Jordanes, *Getica* 34, 119. Jordanes' family came from Moesia (*PLRE* III, s.v. Jordanes 1). He must have known; his evidence should not be simply discounted.

73 See, for instance, Gassowski 2002, 269–74.

74 Curta 2001, 348.

75 Proc. 7.14.33.

76 Proc. 7.40.6: soon after Germanus had been appointed *magister militum per Thracias*.

77 These are not on Curta's list, but they were the cause of Chilbudius' counter-raids across the Danube in 530–3, and we are told that they resumed after Chilbudius' defeat (Proc. 7.14.1–36). So it is not the case that 'Slavene raiding was a response to Justinian's aggressive policies, with both the fortified frontier and his barbarian allies' as is claimed by Curta 2001, 339.

78 Proc. 7.33.8.

forces to plunder all over the Balkan provinces. They reached the suburbs of Constantinople, broke through the defences of the Chersonese, plundered Greece as far as the Peloponnese, captured 32 fortresses in Illyricum, and the city of Cassandria (formerly Potidaea) in Greece. They are said to have carried off 120,000 captives and returned home across the Danube without anybody having tried to intercept them.⁷⁹ This happened before the resumption of the Persian war in the same year.⁸⁰

The scale of Sclavene raids seems to have grown through the 540s. In 549, 3000 Sclavenes raided deep into Thrace and Illyricum. They defeated several detachments of the Roman army, and for the first time captured a city.⁸¹ In 551, a Sclavene band was diverted from attacking Thessalonika (Proc. 7.40), but the Sclavenes went on to plunder Illyricum. They wintered in the Empire for the first time and proceeded to plunder right up to the Long Walls.⁸² But after this massive raid by the Sclavenes, we do not hear of another before around 574. Why they should have remained inactive, or at least ceased to invade the Balkan provinces, for around 20 years is obscure. An army of Huns invaded Illyricum in 545 and caused the Illyrican soldiers in Belisarius' army in Italy to desert and return home.⁸³ In 558–9, Cotrigur Huns overran Thrace and Northern Greece.⁸⁴ In 562, Huns sacked Novae and Anastasiopolis.⁸⁵

It is clear that the Danube line was extremely penetrable whether attacked by marauding groups of Sclavenes, whose strength might have varied from several hundred to several thousands, or by the armies of the Cotrigurs or Huns. Invaders could not be stopped from invading the Empire across the Danube and from roaming through the Balkan provinces, carrying off the population and plundering whatever was movable. The fortified towns and villages clearly did not present a barrier. What they did was to protect the occupants sheltering behind their walls. We cannot expect our sources to report the capture of small hill settlements, but we hear of very few cities falling to raiders in the reign of Justinian. The strengths as well as the weaknesses of the Justinianic defence strategy, if that is what it was, are shown very clearly in Agathias' account of how an army of Cotrigur horsemen crossed the frozen Danube

79 Proc. 2 4.4–11.

80 Proc. 2.4.12.

81 Proc. 7. 38.1–23.

82 Proc. 7.25ff.

83 Proc. 7.11.13–16.

84 See Sadini, 'The transformation of cities in Late Antiquity within the provinces of Macedonia and Epirus,' in Poulter, *The Transition to Late Antiquity*, 311–336.

85 Theophanes AM 236. 24–237.

towards the end of Justinian's reign, in the winter of 558/9, at a time when the fortifications listed by Procopius were presumably in position, and encountered no opposition whatsoever when it crossed into the Empire and advanced as far as the Hebrus river. It then divided into three divisions, one moved into Greece, the second tried to force its way into the Thracian Chersonese, while the third and largest division, said to have been 7,000 strong, crossed the Long Wall, which was unmanned, and plundered the immediate neighbourhood of Constantinople. The band invading Greece was checked by a Roman garrison at Thermopylae, the attack on the Chersonese wall was beaten back, the main force outside Constantinople was repelled by a scratch force of 300 veterans backed by civilians and commanded by the aged Belisarius. Meanwhile the open countryside remained at the mercy of the invaders, and no attempt was made to bring the united force to battle. The Cotrigurs were eventually paid to leave,⁸⁶ after which the Empire was able to persuade another tribe of Huns, the Utrigurs who were its allies, to attack the Cotrigurs after they had returned to the north bank of the Danube.⁸⁷

What the story of this campaign shows, and accounts of other campaigns confirm, is that there was no continuous line of defence along the Danube. It also shows that no mobile units were stationed in the frontier provinces ready to intercept any invaders who had slipped in between the forts along the Danube, and that this was so even at a time when there was a truce with Persia, and no need to weaken the Danube frontier by transferring many units to the East.⁸⁸ There were some soldiers in the threatened provinces. We hear of a garrison at Tzurullum (Tzouroulon) just west of the Long Wall, of another at the little town of Topirus (Topeiros), also of troops defending the Chersonese, and of yet others guarding the pass of Thermopylae. Some regular troops, but not very many, were stationed in Constantinople itself. There certainly were very many more garrisons than we know about.⁸⁹ Nicopolis ad Istrum, as rebuilt after destruction by the Huns, seems to have been designed as a fortress to protect

86 Agathias 5.12–23; Theophanes AM 233.4–234.12 gives a substantially different account of the fighting around Constantinople; cf. Cameron 1970, 49–50.

87 Agathias. 24–5.

88 In 545, a five-years truce had been signed (though this did not apply to Lazica) which was renewed in 551 and 556; in 561 a peace of 50 years was agreed.

89 There must also have been garrisons in many of the forts along the Danube and elsewhere, but it won't do to assume that where there was a fortification there was also a garrison, and then to estimate the strength of the garrisons on the basis of the size of the fort, as is done by Curta 2001, 183 table 7. For each fort the existence of a garrison needs to be demonstrated; cf. Dinchev 2001, 217–35, esp. 225–6; also idem 1998, 172–3.

a garrison and churches rather than as a centre of population.⁹⁰ Justiniana Prima (Caričin Grad) was designed as a major administrative and ecclesiastical centre and must certainly have had a garrison. Garrisons are mentioned in accounts of some of the later campaigns, for instance, a small garrison at Singidunum,⁹¹ another at Asemus,⁹² and we can perhaps assume that some of the cities which later successfully fought off the Avars were defended by regular troops, although at this time it was also normal for civilians to man the walls when their city was under attack.

The problem was that the garrisons of cities were not always willing to become involved in campaigns away from their cities. The classic case is that of Asemus whose garrison successfully resisted the command of the general Peter to join his mobile army campaigning along the Danube in 594.⁹³ Another example is the strategy which Germanus was forced to adopt in 550 when recruiting men for an army he was going to lead into Italy against the Goths. Though he was assembling the army on imperial orders, and was himself a cousin of the emperor, Germanus could not simply order garrison commanders to furnish him with troops. Instead he approached individuals from among these officers' military followings, their *bucellarii*, and persuaded them to join his force by offering higher pay.⁹⁴ In 578/9, when the Avars attacked Sirmium, the emperor Maurice ordered officers to travel through Illyricum and Dalmatia to scrape together a force to defend the city with garrison troops.⁹⁵

One would imagine that civic garrisons defended not only the walls, but also the farms and farm stock in the immediate neighbourhood of their cities. The more remote countryside must have been wide open to attack. This in turn will have severely limited agricultural exploitation. This could well explain the changes noted by Poulter at Nicopolis: 'Instead of bread-wheat, barley and rye the most important cereal would seem to have been millet. There appears to have been a shift away from winter-sown cereal crops in favour of spring-sown and/or garden cultivated millet and legumes, that is crops which could be grown close to the city, or conceivably on the open land inside the defences.'⁹⁶

90 Poulter 1995, 45–6, also Poulter 2007, 78–9.

91 Menander fr. 25.1.

92 Theophylact 7.3.1–10.

93 Theophylact 7.3.1–9. Asemus was one of the few cities in the region to have been successfully defended against Attila (see Poulter 2007, 104). This was about 150 years earlier, but it is quite likely that the same regiment had already been involved.

94 Proc. 7.39.16.

95 Menander fr. 25.2. 90 and Blockley's note, p. 284 n. 302.

96 Poulter 1995, 44.

A decline in the cultivation of locally grown cereals would also make it necessary to feed the troops of the frontier garrisons with imported wheat, and therefore provides a likely explanation for the creation of the command of the *quaestor exercitus*, which combined frontier provinces with provinces remote from the border whose agriculture was not operating under constant threat of attack.

From 552, there appears to have been a relaxation of the pressure on the Danube frontier, with the one important exception of the great invasion of the Cotrigurs in 558/9. The next big raid is not recorded until 15 years later in 574, and by then the whole situation had been changed by the arrival of the Avars.⁹⁷ It is probably a mistake to attribute this apparent lull to a belated effectiveness of the Justinianic fortifications. After all they had failed completely against the Cotrigurs. The apparent lull may simply be a result of our having no intact narrative history after 557/8, when Agathias' *History* ends. The events from 558 to 582 are related by Menander Protector, whose *History* has survived only in fragments. However, there is a striking reduction in the number of Roman coins dating from this period.⁹⁸ Since much of the coinage crossed the Danube either as plunder or as imperial subsidies to barbarian peoples, its absence could signify that there was less plundering, and hence also less payment of subsidies. Perhaps there was also less recruiting north of the Danube, and hence less military pay. It could be that the Cotrigurs and Sclavenes, who had caused the Romans so much trouble, were now themselves troubled by the arrival of the Avars.

The Impact of the Avars

The Coming of the Avars

The coming of the Avars certainly changed the politico-military situation drastically. The story of the Avars is in some ways quite like that of the Visigoths nearly 200 years earlier. Like the Visigoths, the Avars were a fugitive tribe that, though they had been admitted into the Empire as a federate ally, very quickly became a dangerous enemy. In the later sixth and early seventh centuries, the history of the Avars is closely linked with that of the Sclavenes. From the 580s onwards the two peoples to some extent operated in association; with the Sclavenes enjoying (if that is the right word) the protection of the Avars, to

97 Curta 2001, 116–17 table 4.

98 See Curta 2001, 173–81, Figs. 5–12. Note the small number of coins minted during the 20 or so years without Slavene invasions among the coins and hoards found in this region.

whom they paid some kind of tribute. Yet the two groups were very different. The Avars were centralized, the Sclavenes multicentred. The Avars have left lots of grave goods, suggesting that they had an aristocracy, the Sclavenes have not. Moreover, the Sclavenes had become a menace to the Balkan provinces before the Avars emerged on the scene.

Avar power was built up remarkably quickly. Around ad 560 the Saraguri were driven out of their territory by the Avars and approached the Romans for friendship. The Avars themselves had been displaced by other tribes. These events happened some distance from the Roman frontier.⁹⁹ In 560/61, Justinian made a treaty with the Avars and paid them a subsidy.¹⁰⁰ The Avars wanted to be settled in Scythia Minor, Justinian wanted to settle them in Pannonia. No agreement was reached and there seems to have been some fighting,¹⁰¹ but the treaty relationship was soon resumed. Then Justin II terminated it.¹⁰² The Avars had been building up a network of subject allies which included the Hunnic tribes—the Cotrigurs and Utrigurs—that had been such a menace to the Empire.¹⁰³ The latter two now disappear from history.¹⁰⁴ According to Agathias ‘they were reduced to servitude in the lands of other peoples (that is the Avars) whose names they have assumed’.¹⁰⁵ In 567, the Avars allied with the Lombards,¹⁰⁶ and between them they destroyed the kingdom of the Gepids. In 568, the Lombards left Pannonia to move into Italy, and the Avars moved into the former Roman province to take their place. There they rapidly built up a formidable power. They almost immediately attacked Sirmium which had been under Gepid control, and was now again subject to the Empire, but the Romans defended it successfully.¹⁰⁷

99 Priscus fr. 40.1–2 with Blockley’s note 156.

100 Menander fr. 5.1–2.

101 Menander fr. 5.4.

102 Menander fr. 12.10.

103 As Menander makes an Avar envoy boast to Justin II in AD 565: ‘For we destroyed wholesale the neighbouring barbarians who were continually ravaging Thrace, and none at all of those who survive now overrun the borders of Thrace, since they fear the might of the Avars.’ (Fr. 8. 23–7 tr. Blockley).

104 Agathias, who died between 579 and 582, remarks on their disappearance: *Histories* 5.11.4, 25.5.

105 Agathias, *Histories* 5.25.5 tr. J.D. Frendo.

106 Menander fr. 12.1.

107 Menander fr. 12. 2–8.

In AD 570–1, the Avars again sent an embassy ‘on the same issues as often before’. Presumably their demands included Sirmium, but also ‘land to live on’.¹⁰⁸ After negotiations, the emperor Justin II refused to grant them what they wanted. War followed. The Avars won a victory, as it seems, in Thrace.¹⁰⁹ A treaty was then agreed between them and the Romans:¹¹⁰ they were evidently given, or rather given back, the status of *foederati*, and a subsidy.

In 572, war had broken out between the Empire and Persia and in consequence the Empire had very few troops to spare for the Balkans. So, in 574, the emperor Tiberius called on the Avars as federates to help him ward off the Sclavenes,¹¹¹ large numbers of whom—though the figure of 100,000 is surely very much exaggerated—were raiding in Greece and elsewhere.¹¹² The chagan agreed. Exceptionally,¹¹³ we are told his name, which was Bayan. So Tiberius had the Avars ferried across a river, perhaps the Danube, but more likely the Save. It seems that the Avars were going to reach the lands of the Sclavenes by marching through imperial territory along the south bank of the Danube. No doubt this was easier than to march along the low-lying and marshy north bank. They were then shipped across the Danube to attack the Sclavene villages.¹¹⁴

The operation against the Sclavenes was supervised by John, the *quaestor exercitus*.¹¹⁵ Roman administration was still functioning in the provinces on the lower Danube. In 574–5, Tiberius had carried out a widespread recruitment drive which also included recruiting in the Balkans.¹¹⁶ At this time there was still a surplus population and the Justinianic arrangements were still intact.

In 579, Avars declared that they were about to attack the Sclavenes. In fact they proceeded to attack Sirmium, after isolating it, by building bridges across

108 Menander fr. 15.1. One wonders what land they demanded, and indeed why they demanded land, when they had so recently moved into Pannonia. In the many subsequent negotiations between the Avars and the Empire, the Avars were interested in gold and not in land.

109 Menander fr. 15.3.

110 Menander fr. 15.5–6.

111 Menander fr. 21; Evag. 5.11.

112 Menander fr. 20.2, 21.

113 Theophylact simply refers to ‘the chagan’, without giving his name.

114 Menander fr. 21.55.

115 Menander fr. 21.15.

116 Evag. 5.14, 209.27–210.2: Paeonians (Pannonians), Mysians (from Moesia), Illyrians are mentioned in addition to various barbarians from both sides of the Alps, who may well have provided the majority of the recruits, in a major attempt to enlarge the army for the Persian war. See also Theophanes AM 6074 (251.24–7); John of Ephesus 6.13; Theophylact 3.12.3.

the Save river. The Roman garrison of Sirmium was small and there was a Roman general at Singidunum.¹¹⁷ It looks as if Maurice tried to scrape together a stronger garrison from troops in Illyricum and Dalmatia.¹¹⁸ However, the siege lasted two years, presumably because the city could still get some supplies by river. A small Roman relief force under Theognis had no success and Theognis carried out negotiations with the chagan through a Hun interpreter. Eventually, the city surrendered to the Avars and its garrison was evacuated.¹¹⁹ Now that the Avars had captured Sirmium from the Empire, they seem to have been satisfied with their territorial possessions. Subsequently they made no further attempts to expand at the expense of the Empire, though they remained very much interested in preserving, and if possible increasing, their golden subsidies.

Maurice and the Avars 579–92: Disaster

While the Avars were acquiring the strategically situated city of Sirmium, the Slavs had resumed ravaging the Balkans.¹²⁰ They roamed through Greece several times. Coin hoards found at Corinth, Athens, and Olympia, bear witness to the fear they aroused.¹²¹ A destruction layer at Argos seems to date from this time. According to John of Ephesus this period also saw the beginnings of Slav settlement in Greece.¹²² Contemporary coin hoards have been found in various places in what is now Bulgaria.¹²³ The years 580–91 were indeed a very bad time for the Romans in the Balkans.

After the capture of Sirmium a treaty was arranged between Avars and Romans in which Romans not only ceded Sirmium, but also agreed to supply the Avars annually with 80,000 *solidi* worth of silver ware and embroidered cloth. After two years, negotiations broke down when the Avars demanded an additional 20,000 *solidi* of subsidies.¹²⁴ As often as not, the Avars were more concerned to extort gold coins or treasure than territory. They immediately proceeded to attack and capture Singidunum, which was no longer garrisoned. The citizens nevertheless inflicted casualties. The chagan then marched down

117 Menander fr. 25.1; was the general *dux Moesia*?

118 Menander fr. 25.2.

119 Menander fr. 27.3.

120 For an interruption of raiding by the Sclavenes, see above.

121 Metcalf 1962, 134–57.

122 John of Ephesus 6.25. But this does not appear to be confirmed by archaeology.

123 Popovic 1975, 445–504.

124 Theophylact 1.3.8–13.

the Danube (583) and destroyed Augustae¹²⁵ and Viminacium.¹²⁶ Augustae is not subsequently mentioned by Theophylact, and Viminacium only as the name of an island. The Avars then captured Anchialus on the Black Sea. We are told that they spared the baths, for use by the chagan's harem.¹²⁷ But the city too survived, to figure in subsequent campaigns. Negotiations now took place again and again without success. It is not clear whether the chagan wintered at Anchialus, but, in 584, peace was agreed at the price of a gold subsidy of 80,000 *solidi*, that is precisely the sum which Maurice had previously refused.¹²⁸ Perhaps it was only now that the Avars withdrew from imperial territory.¹²⁹

But now, as Theophylact tells us, 'the Avars let loose the Sclavenes',¹³⁰ who proceeded to strike as far as the Long Walls, plundering widely. The Roman commander Comentiolus defeated them by the river Erignia just to the west of the Long Walls, but we are not told that he drove them out of the Empire. The following year he defeated a large force of Sclavenes, led by one Ardagastus, near Adrianople, expelled them from Astike, the region adjoining the city of Constantinople, and liberated their captives. It had required the *magister militum praesentalis* and the troops available for the defence of Constantinople to drive the Sclavenes out of the environment of the capital city and it had taken them more than a year to do it. The invading Sclavenes had clearly been a major force.

In 586, the Avars resumed their invasion on the ground that the Emperor had refused to surrender a man accused of having slept with one of the chagan's wives. They once more advanced down the Danube and captured Ratiaria, Bononia, and Aquae. Ratiaria is not mentioned again by Theophylact. It may well have been destroyed. Bononia and Aquae are mentioned again, and therefore seem to have survived.¹³¹ After capturing these places immediately to the east of Sirmium, they captured Dorostolon (better known as Durostorum, modern Silistra), and then turned south-east to capture Tropaeum Traiani, Zaldapa, Panassa, and Marcianopolis. Tropaeum Traiani is not mentioned again. Under the protection of the Avars, groups of Slavs were still raiding the Roman Balkan

125 Mashov 1994, 21–36.

126 Theophylact 1.4.4.

127 Theophylact 1.4.5.

128 Theophylact 1.6.6.

129 Later events show that the Avars even withdrew from the strategically situated city of Singidunum. They had no ambition to expand further into the imperial provinces along the lower Danube.

130 Theophylact 1.7.1.

131 Theophylact 6.4.6 and 7.2.2.

provinces. It was probably in 586 that the first Sclavenes' siege of Thessalonika took place.¹³² The disasters of that year were the worst calamity suffered by the Romans since Attila's Huns had been at the gates of Constantinople. The whole line of Danube fortresses had been lost. The Empire never recovered full control of the Danube plain.

In the autumn and winter, Maurice undertook a desperate recruiting campaign.¹³³ As a result, Comentiolus, the *magister militum*, had an army of 10,000 for the campaigning season of 587. The Avars were in Scythia Minor. They may have wintered there. Comentiolus divided his army into three and planned to attack the Avars at Zaldapa and Tomis.¹³⁴ This operation was largely unsuccessful and left the Avars free to enter central Thrace. They then made successive unsuccessful attempts to capture the principal cities: Beroea (Augusta Traiana), Diocletianopolis, Philippopolis, and Adrianople. Beroea, Philippopolis, and Adrianople were defended by their inhabitants. Eventually the general John Mystacon defeated the Avars outside Adrianople.¹³⁵ They left Thrace across the Haemus mountains, and captured Appiaria on the way back along the Danube.¹³⁶ Here, it is said that a traitor taught them to build siege engines.

The start of the campaigning season of 588 saw the chagan and his army back in their own territory. He now felt strong enough to demand that his subsidy should receive a further increase. When Maurice refused this, the chagan resumed war.¹³⁷ He ordered the Sclavenes near Singidunum to build ships to enable him to control the crossing of the Danube.¹³⁸ Theophylact tells us

132 *Miracula* 116–30 (miracles 13 and 140), for date see Whitby 1988a, 117–18. My whole account of these campaigns owes a great deal to this book, and of course to Michael and Mary Whitby's translation of Theophylact, even if I differ from Michael Whitby in some details of interpretation.

133 Whitby 1988a, 147; Michael Syr. 10.21, 362.

134 It looks as if they had wintered there, but it is possible that they had wintered at home and then had once more advanced along the Danube.

135 Theophylact 2.15.3–16.13.

136 The setting of the capture of Appiaria at the end of the campaign is Whitby's convincing suggestion (1988a, 150–1). In Theophylact it precedes the unsuccessful sieges, but that does not fit the geography of the surrounding narrative.

137 Theophylact 6.4.1.

138 The Avars did not absolutely need the ships to operate south of the Danube, as is shown by their operations in the previous year. They could start operations from settlements south of the Danube. But the fact that the Save as well as the Danube lay across their lines of communications must have made such campaigning more difficult, especially as a Roman fleet operated on the Danube. This was perhaps the strongest card held by the

that it was the people of Singidunum who destroyed the boats. Whitby argues that only soldiers would have dared to provoke the Avars in this way. But this does not follow. Civilians did regularly defend their cities at this time, and in the campaigns of 583 and 595 Singidunum was certainly ungarrisoned. The people of Singidunum, seeing the Sclavenes building ships not far from their city, would have thought that they were preparing an attack on Singidunum itself, or perhaps that the ships would be used to cut their supply route down the Danube. So they took preemptive action and burnt the boats. In retaliation the Sclavenes, who never had any difficulty in crossing the river, laid siege to Singidunum. The citizens resisted and after seven days bought them off with 2,000 *solidi*, a gold-inlaid table, and clothing. The chagan then ordered the Sclavenes to build the boats well away from Singidunum, at Sirmium. That is the last we hear of the boats. The position of Singidunum is interesting. The imperial administration had broken down in much of Moesia Prima and Dacia Ripensis, but a few of the river cities like Singidunum, and as appears in a later campaign Asemus, and perhaps Novae, continued to hold out. These places must have had a significant civilian population, and in the case of Singidunum even a supply of gold coins to be paid as ransom. They had, in fact, for the time being reverted to the condition of nearly independent city-states.

The chagan set out on his campaign as before.¹³⁹ By-passing Singidunum,¹⁴⁰ he marched along the Danube past Bononia, but then, instead of going round the eastern end of the Haemus range as he had done previously, he took his army through a pass over the mountains. Priscus, who was now commanding the Roman army, first tried to block the passes, but then withdrew, and the chagan was able to cross the Haemus into Thrace. He captured Anchialus,¹⁴¹ but failed to capture Drizipera (Drousipara), or Heraclea (Perinthus), or Tzurullon (Tzouroulon), all situated on the western side of the Long Wall. At Tzurullon he had Priscus and his army surrounded. But then, surprisingly, the chagan gave up the siege and returned home. Various explanations are given: that he was deceived by a faked letter announcing the coming of powerful Roman

Romans in their wars with the Avars. That is surely why the Avars now wanted to build a fleet of their own.

139 Theophylact's narrative breaks off suddenly after the mention of Bononia. Whitby convincingly argues that Theophylact's account of Priscus' first campaign is out of context, and that it really belongs here. I have followed Whitby 1988a, 151–5.

140 But according to Evag. 6.10 and Michael Syr. 10.21 (based on John of Ephesus) he may have captured Singidunum.

141 Michael Syr. 10.21.

reinforcements;¹⁴² that he received a payment of 800 lbs of gold; and that he feared that Turks would attack Sirmium.¹⁴³ Priscus returned to Byzantium, and his army found subsistence in the villages of Thrace.¹⁴⁴

A Very Limited Imperial Recovery

In 591, the Empire made peace with the Persians and was now able to concentrate all its resources on restoring the situation in the Balkans.¹⁴⁵ It did so with some success which is emphasised by Whitby: 'By 602, the Roman Empire had recovered from the disasters of Maurice's first decade, and Roman authority was apparently re-established over much of the Balkans. In 602 it was the Avar federation that seemed on the brink of collapse under the combined pressure of the Roman army and disaffected subjects.'¹⁴⁶ Whitby balances his optimistic assessment of the strategic situation with a realistic account of the devastation that still had to be made good.¹⁴⁷ But I will argue that his strategic assessment is nevertheless too optimistic, not least because in an intellectual climate in which people are reluctant to admit that anything ever deteriorates, his assessment has been made the basis of an excessively optimistic diagnosis of the health and strength of the Empire at the start of the seventh century, on the eve of the disasters inflicted by the Persians and Arabs.¹⁴⁸

I will examine the campaigns of the 590s from the point of view of what they tell us about the extent of the re-establishment of imperial control over the provinces in the Danube plain. In 589/90, Maurice was able to transfer units of the army from the East to the Balkans.¹⁴⁹ In 590, he led out the newly arrived troops to inspect the damage that had been done in Thrace, particularly at

142 Theophylact 6.5.13–15.

143 Michael Syr. 10.21.

144 Theophylact 6.6.1. The reconstruction of the campaign essentially follows Whitby 1988a, 151–3.

145 For movement of troops from east to west and a recruiting campaign in Armenia, see Sebeos 1999, chapters 18 and 20. Whitby 1988a, 147–8, argues from the fact that the general John Mystacon, who normally served in the East, took part in this year's campaign in the West, that the recruiting in Armenia took place before the peace with Persia, and that Mystacon had come West with Armenian recruits.

146 Whitby 1988a, 184.

147 Whitby 1988a, 179–84.

148 Eg. Whittow 1996, 51: 'With the apparent waning of Avar power in 600, the outlook on the steppe world was from a Roman perspective more favourable than it had been for at least a century and arguably much longer.'

149 Theophanes AM 6082.

Anchialus.¹⁵⁰ If he expected the Avars to invade Thrace once more, he was pleasantly disappointed. The Avars did not appear in this year. There thus was an opportunity to restore law and order in the Thracian plain. In 593, the emperor ordered Priscus to campaign against the Sclavenes. This was the first time the Empire had taken the offensive against them since the resumption of their raids in the late 570s. Priscus set out from Heraclea, after four days' march he arrived at Drizipera (Drousipara), about halfway between Constantinople and Adrianople.¹⁵¹ He then marched to Durostolon (Durostorum) on the Danube, 20 camps away. Clearly the territory from the neighbourhood of Constantinople to the Danube was not under permanent Roman military control at this time. He crossed the Danube and attacked a large Slavene band led by Ardagastus, the leader who had led a Slavene war band as far as the Long Walls in 585. He was evidently a notable warrior. The Avars protested that an attack on the Sclavenes was an attack on themselves. But though the army was operating against Sclavenes across the Danube, Sclavenes were still operating within the Empire. A Roman detachment taking the booty back to Constantinople was ambushed by them, but managed to overcome the ambushers. Fifty were captured. So the engagement was on a fairly small scale. Meanwhile, on the north bank of the Danube, Priscus attacked another Slavene band, this time under a leader called Musocius, who bore the title '*rex*'. The fighting seems to have been in marshes around the Danube delta. The chagan of the Avars prepared to launch a counter-strike of Sclavenes across the Danube. Negotiations ensued. The outcome was that Priscus handed over to the chagan 5,000 prisoners, and the chagan agreed not to harass his retreat from the Danube. The Roman army then returned to Drizipera. The year's campaign turned out to have been a punitive raid and in no sense a restoration of the Roman organization of the Balkan provinces, nor for that matter an attempt to patrol a frontier.¹⁵²

In 594, a new commander, Peter, brother of the emperor Maurice, set out on another campaign. He started from Perinthus then proceeded to Drizipera, and on to Odessus (modern Varna). In other words he marched along the coast. Then he turned north-west towards the Danube cities. En route, near Marcianopolis, he encountered a party of 600 Sclavenes who were moving along the highway north, with their booty and prisoners in carts. Clearly the territory was far from having been restored to order. Theophylact tells us that they had been plundering Zaldapa, Aquae, and Scupi, presumably in winter

150 Theophylact 5.16.1; Theophanes AM 6083.

151 A place that seems to have received city status quite recently. It had a bishop by the mid-sixth century, possibly to be identified with Siltice. See Jones 1971, 26.

152 Theophylact 6.1.1–10.3, 6.11.3–11.21.

393–4. If that is right, these Sclavenes were returning from an extraordinarily wide sweep through what had been the Balkan provinces of the Eastern Empire. Alternatively Theophylact has perhaps amalgamated information about separate raids.¹⁵³ In any case there had been no force in place, whether imperial or local, to challenge the raiders. The lack of imperial control would be significant in either case. The Sclavenes were eventually wiped out, but only with difficulty, though they faced the main imperial army. Peter marched to the Danube. He must have crossed the river, though Theophylact does not say so, and invaded Slavene territory, no doubt intending another punitive expedition. But Maurice called him back, according to Theophylact because he feared a Slavene thrust towards Constantinople. Whether indeed there was such a thrust we do not know. Peter crossed back and came to Pistus (Sexaginta Prista). There he turned east and marched to Zaldapa, some 65 miles.¹⁵⁴ He then turned west again, for we are told that on the second day he came to Iatrus.¹⁵⁵ Then, after by-passing Latarkium, he camped at Novae, outside the city. The citizens asked him to come in and to take part in the festival of the martyr Lupus.¹⁵⁶ Peter was reluctant because of the urgency of his march (why was it so urgent?) but he stayed two days, and then marched on via Theodoropolis and Curisca (Securisca) to Asemus. Once again he encamped outside the city but the citizens invited him in personally. The garrison paraded for him, and Peter decided to incorporate them in the army. The citizens and the garrison produced a decree of Justin guaranteeing them military protection. The soldiers then took refuge in the church and prepared to defend it by force. The officer sent to attack the church refused to do so and a *scribo* sent to arrest the bishop was thrown out of the city by the assembled citizens. The city gates were closed and the citizens acclaimed the emperor and cursed the general. Peter then marched for six days but we are not told in what direction. Then he encountered 10,000 Bulgars. This means that he had crossed the Danube, for the Bulgars could not have been south of the Danube on Roman territory while the chagan was at peace with the Romans, nor could the chagan have considered that an attack on Bulgars south of the Danube was a breach of the

153 Another, and likely alternative, is that the relevant Aquae and Scupi were two small forts to the west of Zaldapa. See W. Pohl 1988, 383 n. 17.

154 Theophylact 7.2.16.

155 Since the distance between Zaldapa and Iatrus is about 90 miles, Peter cannot have arrived on the 'second day'. It looks as if here (and elsewhere), Theophylact's account is based on a narrative detailing the progress of the army day by day, which he has greatly abbreviated without understanding the topography involved.

156 22 August 594.

truce between Avars and the Empire.¹⁵⁷ So the six days' march involved crossing the Danube, even though Theophylact does not mention any crossing. Subsequently he met Sclavenes, so it looks as if he was now making a sweep through Sclavene territory north of the Danube. This involved crossing at least two rivers, something like four days' marching apart, the second of which was called the Helibacia (Ialomița?).¹⁵⁸

What had been the object of Peter's march backwards and forwards along the Danube? According to Whitby,¹⁵⁹ 'internal policing can be inferred from the succession of places passed by the army on its march'. This is by no means certain. The impression given by Theophylact's narrative is that Peter was in a hurry. Policing, the searching out of bandits and the restoration of orderly government takes time. Theophylact's account is obviously incomplete. On three occasions he has left it to the reader to infer that the army has crossed the Danube, and he implies that the army arrived at Iatrus on the second day after leaving Zaldepa, 90 miles away. He has obviously shortened his source, whatever that was, considerably and not very helpfully for a reader who wants to understand the strategy of the campaign. But taking the account as it is, the most likely inference to my mind is that Peter was acting in accordance with the letter which had recalled him from operations among the settlements of the Sclavenes on the north bank of the Danube. In other words, he was trying to forestall a Sclavene thrust across the Danube, which might take place anywhere along a length of 100 km or more. Preparation for getting a thousand or more men across the river will have been observable from the other side, and movement along the south bank of the river was much easier than along the north bank. So I would suggest that Peter led his army up the Danube to look for signs of an imminent crossing, for instance, an assembly of dugout canoes. When he felt sure that there was no such thing, he crossed over himself to carry out a pre-emptive strike of the same kind as that which Priscus had carried out the previous year.

157 Theophylact 7.4.7.

158 The identification of the rivers is not certain: Schreiner 1985, n. 930 argues that the 'neighbouring river' of 7.4.8 is the Danube. So also Pohl 1988, 143. But even while at Asemus Peter had been only a few miles from the Danube, he now only reached the 'neighbouring river' after four days' march. He had evidently stayed on the north bank of the river after his encounter with the Bulgars, and marched deep into Sclavene territory. In 393 Priscus had campaigned in the same area. He had crossed the Helibacia and then fought a battle on a river beyond that, the Paspirius (6.9.9).

159 Whitby 1988a, 159.

After crossing the Danube Peter's first encounter was with some Bulgarians who were subject allies of the Avars, with whom the Empire was at that moment at peace. He attacked them notwithstanding. Then he defeated one band of Sclavenes—whose leader, one Peiragastus, was killed—but was himself defeated by a second group on the far side of the Helibacia.¹⁶⁰ The army then returned to Astike after suffering heavy losses.¹⁶¹ Again there was no question of imperial authority having been restored. The campaigns were punitive raids, which in Whitby's words 'contributed greatly to the security of the frontier by disrupting Sclavene preparations for crossing the Danube'.¹⁶²

It is interesting that the government several times attempted to keep the army north of the Danube during the winter and met with successful resistance by the troops.¹⁶³ Why was there no compromise strategy of wintering south of the Danube? Could it be that the territory had been so devastated that it was not possible to feed the army there? The Avars too seem to have avoided wintering in these much-raided lands.¹⁶⁴ Might it perhaps have been hoped by the staff sitting comfortably at Constantinople that the army could be fed by plundering the enemy across the Danube?

In 595, Priscus for a third time led an army to the Danube. As the Empire was not at war with the Avars, his purpose must have been to make another attack on the Sclavenes in their own territory, only on this occasion on Sclavenes settled further west. Again he started from Astike far behind the frontier. We are told that he required 15 camps to reach the Danube, which he crossed and then proceeded upstream to Novae (Νόβας τὰς ἄνω) on the fourth day.¹⁶⁵ This immediately raises a difficulty. The text suggests that this Novae was a Roman bridgehead on the north bank of the Danube, presumably more or less opposite Novae.¹⁶⁶ But this is clearly not right. For no bridgehead opposite Novae is known. There was a second Novae further up the Danube, in the Iron Gates region. It too lay south of the Danube, but was faced by a Roman fort on the opposite bank, which Procopius calls Literata.¹⁶⁷ It looks as if Priscus came to this Novae, camped there for four days, and only then crossed the river.¹⁶⁸

160 Theophylact 7.5.9.

161 Theophylact 7.7.1.

162 Whitby 1988a, 161.

163 Theophylact 6.10.1–3, 11.3; 8.6.1–7.7.

164 On the need to winter in a region where corn was plentiful see: Maurice *Strategikon* 1.2.

165 Theophylact 7.6.7.

166 This is how it is interpreted by C. de Boor, the editor.

167 Proc. *Aed.* 4.6.3.

168 He was therefore in a position to intervene quickly at Singidunum (Theophylact 7.10.2).

That he did cross the Danube is certain, for the chagan protested that he had invaded Avar territory, and broken the treaty between the Avars and the Empire. As an excuse Priscus claimed that he had come for the hunting. This excuse proves that the dispute was over Priscus' presence north of the Danube. If he had merely taken his army along the south bank of the Danube, he would not have needed an excuse. There were diplomatic talks with the Avars, which give Theophylact an excuse for an excursus on the past history of that people.

The chagan eventually retaliated for what he considered an aggressive act by destroying the fortifications of Singidunum, and was about to transfer its population to Avar territory. To judge by a modern map of archaeological finds attributed to the Avars, Singidunum was a border town, just on the edge of the region of Avar settlements.¹⁶⁹ The Danube marked the limit of the two spheres of influence, but Singidunum marked the edge of the Avar territory proper. The Avars evidently did not want to hold it as a fortress. If they had wanted to hold it, they would not have pulled down its walls. But they clearly did not want the Romans to hold it either. Whitby¹⁷⁰ suggests that the Avars' razing of the walls of Singidunum may have been a sign of lack of confidence, but it might just as well be described as an escalation of the conflict produced by Priscus' crossing of the Danube.¹⁷¹ Priscus sent a force by river to assist Singidunum. The Avars fled before the Romans arrived, not only because of the Roman troops, but also because they feared the population, which was evidently considerable, and quite possibly armed. The Romans then restored the fortifications.

Now the chagan evidently decided that the truce had definitely been broken and launched a major expedition into Dalmatia. According to Whitby, the chagan moved his army into Dalmatia because he dared not attack Priscus; alternatively it might be suggested that he thought a raid into Dalmatia might be profitable, while he did not anticipate plunder from attacking Priscus. Priscus for his part certainly did not dare attack the chagan. The Avars sacked a city whose name has been transmitted as Bonkeis, and captured no fewer than forty forts. When Priscus heard of these 'terrible events' he sent 2,000 men to reconnoitre. They proceeded with the utmost caution, not using the highway in case they met hordes of barbarians. Obviously the territory was anything but under imperial control. They managed to ambush a column of barbarians—said to have been 2,000 strong, escorting the booty back to the Avar homeland—and to destroy it. The account ends: 'The chagan was cast down in great

169 See Daim 2003, 463–570, relevant 466 Fig. 2.

170 Whitby 1988a, 161.

171 In 580, according to Michael Syr. 10.21, 361, the Avars had hoped to terrorize and exploit cities rather than destroy them.

despair after hearing of this reverse', accordingly for eighteen months (autumn 595–summer 597) nothing worthy of record was accomplished by the Romans and barbarians encamped on the Danube.¹⁷²

Meanwhile,¹⁷³ the Sclavenes had been expanding on the western flank of the Avar kingdom. It was in the late 580s and the early 590s that the bishoprics in western Illyricum disappeared from history.¹⁷⁴ Now the Avars turned west to operate against the Bavarians and Franks,¹⁷⁵ and perhaps also to keep control of the Sclavene advances in this area. It is likely that one reason the Avars decided to turn west was because they knew that, since the peace with the Persians, the Empire was able to employ stronger armies in the Balkans. It is likely also that the chagans had always kept themselves well informed of the state of relations between the Roman Empire and the Persians, and that they generally tried to make their raids coincide with Roman preoccupation with the Persian war.

In summer 597, war has been resumed. Theophylact does not tell us why. But, since it was the chagan who struck the first blow by attacking Tomis on the Black Sea, it looks as if it was the Avars who broke the peace. The chagan evidently got to Tomis once more by marching along the Danube through Moesia II. Evidently there was still not any sizable force in the Danube plain to stop him. Seven years after the end of the Persian war, with the Empire able to concentrate all its forces in the Balkans, the conflict with the Avars was still being fought almost entirely on imperial territory. Priscus approached the city and encamped outside it, as did the chagan. There they stayed during the winter. By springtime, the Romans were short of food. At Easter the chagan sent wagons of provisions which he gave to the Romans.¹⁷⁶ In return he asked for Indian spices, which he received. An armistice ensued and the armies separated. Meanwhile a second Roman army was crossing to the Danube over the Haemus Mountains, via Nicopolis ad Istrum. It was led by Comentiolus. This is the first time that we hear of two Roman armies operating against the Avars. This certainly was an indication of growing Roman strength, but fortunately for the Avars the two armies seem to have operated independently.

172 According to Whitby 1988a, 161–2 this phrase conceals the progress of Roman recovery, which in fact represented a considerable triumph.

173 Paul the Deacon 4.10–11.

174 References in Pohl 1988, 123, 146–9: letters of Gregory the Great show that the sees on the Dalmatian coast were still intact.

175 Paul the Deacon 4.10.

176 The Avars must have been in the position, unusual for them, of being able to prevent supplies reaching Priscus by sea.

Comentiolus built a camp at Zikidiba (Sucidava), and then moved on to Iatrus, at twenty 'parasangs' (c.6 miles) distance from the chagan's army.¹⁷⁷ Then he ordered his soldiers to arm themselves. We are not told what Priscus was doing meanwhile. He certainly played no part in subsequent events. The Avar army appeared on the scene unexpectedly. Comentiolus' army was put to flight and retreated over the Haemus to Drizipera. The citizens refused to let him in, and he had to continue his retreat through the Long Walls to Constantinople. The Avars followed. They captured and sacked Drizipera and burnt the martyrium of saint Alexander. There was panic at Constantinople and talk of evacuating the population to Chalcedon across the Bosphorus. But the emperor took the *excubitors*, the army, and a large part of the factions, and garrisoned the Long Wall. Luckily for the Romans, plague then broke out in the Avar army and seven of the chagan's sons died, so peace was agreed and the Danube was once more declared the boundary between the two powers. The Avars also conceded that the Romans were entitled to cross the Danube to proceed against the Sclavenes, but obtained the advantage of getting another 20,000 *solidi* added to the gold subsidy paid annually by the Romans to the chagan, which now seems to have amounted to 120,000 *solidi*.¹⁷⁸ The balance of power had turned in favour of the Romans, but not very much. It still required the plague, as well as an increased subsidy, to shift the Avars from the neighbourhood of Constantinople.

In 599, Maurice broke the peace and launched the first attack on the Avar heartland. This clearly does represent a turning of the tables, and demonstrates a marked gain in imperial confidence. Comentiolus met Priscus at Singidunum. Had Priscus' army remained stationed on the Danube frontier ever since the siege of Tomis in 597? This too would have been an indication of imperial recovery. The Roman armies encamped at Viminacium, an island in the middle of the Danube (not a reference to the city which had been on the south bank of the river and may no longer have existed).¹⁷⁹ The army was rafted across the Danube and fought a number of seemingly highly successful battles, the last

177 Since Sucidava was more than 100 miles to the east of Iatrus, one would have expected an army marching from Nicopolis to have reached Iatrus before Sucidava. Once again Theophylact seems to have greatly abbreviated a fuller narrative which would have given a clear explanation of Comentiolus' movements.

178 Whitby 1988a, 164 minimizes this imperial set-back: 'the Avars were clearly not the irresistible force they had been... the chagan's complaints about Roman infringements of the peace admit a lack of self confidence... permission for the Roman to cross Danube was another sign of weakness.' But one might also comment that the ability to maintain two mobile armies in Thrace had so far brought very little benefit.

179 Milosevic 2002, 151–8.

on the river Tissus, which ended with 3,000 Avars, 6,200 other barbarians, and 8,000 Sclavenes being taken prisoner. Perhaps the other barbarians included Gepids, of whom the Romans are said to have surprised three settlements and killed 30,000.¹⁸⁰ The captives were taken to Tomis but the Avar prisoners were returned to the chagan on Maurice's orders. It may be that Priscus again wintered on the Danube, but Comentiolus took his force to Novae, and asked the inhabitants to guide him and his troops across the Haemus Mountains, along the Track of Trajan (the Trojan Pass). He is purported to have been told that the track had not been used for ninety years. True or false, this story is an indication that there was at this time not very much traffic on the routes from Novae across the Haemus. Comentiolus used the track and found the physical and climatic conditions extremely difficult. Was there no easier winter road? Or could it be that easier routes were vulnerable to Sclavene ambush?¹⁸¹ Comentiolus wintered at Philippopolis and then returned to Constantinople.

The campaign of 599 had evidently been extremely successful, even if Theophylact's account is distorted by prejudice against Comentiolus, and possibly also by panegyric exaggeration of the successes of Priscus. Nevertheless it is important that the settlement areas of the Avars had now again become vulnerable to Roman attack. The Avars and their subject allies had suffered severe casualties, and the Romans had been able to keep a field army on the Danube for several winters. On the other hand the fact that Maurice returned the prisoners shows that he knew that the Avars were far from beaten, and Comentiolus' difficult march across the Haemus Mountains showed how far the Romans still were from having re-established control, never mind an administrative infrastructure in the frontier provinces.

In 600, there were no military operations. In 601, Peter collected his forces and marched to the Danube and arrived at Palastolon (Oescus at the confluence of the Iskar and the Danube).¹⁸² The Avars, under their second in command Apsich, had assembled at 'the cataracts'. Peter confronted him. The Avars retreated to Constantiola, and the Romans returned to winter quarters in Thrace. At this stage there was again only one army in the field, and that was stationed to the south of the Haemus Mountains. But Avar aggression had been contained. According to Whitby,¹⁸³ 'the Avars were on the defensive'. Peter prevented the Avars from encroaching on 'the cataracts'. In fact he had

180 The figure is obviously rhetorical. This raises suspicion of other detail of these victories.

181 Michael and Mary Whitby 1986, 214 n. 13: he reopened Trajan's pass.

182 According to *Proc. Aed.* 4.6.34–5 there was also a fort north of the Danube here.

183 Whitby 1988a, 164.

checked an Avar advance which had taken the Avars along the Danube past Singidunum and Viminacium. This was progress. In the past the Romans had been unable to stop the Avars from advancing much further into the Empire. Nevertheless there was nothing defensive about the Avars' advance to 'the cataracts'. If the Avars had been allowed to consolidate this advance, for instance by garrisoning some of the many presumably abandoned Roman fortifications in that area,¹⁸⁴ they would have been able to block Roman communication with Singidunum. Furthermore the Avars withdrew only to Constantiola. They were still within the Empire, and between the imperial forces and the frontier city of Singidunum.

In 602, the chagan remained inactive, but Maurice feared he would launch a surprise attack in the direction of Constantinople. He evidently thought that the attack would be carried out by Sclavenes, for he ordered Peter to cross the Danube and attack the Sclavenes in their home territory. Thereupon the chagan retaliated by moving against the Antes, allies of the Romans,¹⁸⁵ who had settled somewhere to the north-east of the Sclavenes, near the Black Sea. The operation appears to have been unsuccessful. Significant numbers deserted from the Avar army to the Romans. At the end of another successful campaign, Maurice ordered the Roman army to winter north of the Danube. The soldiers refused. One reason was that hordes of barbarians were operating on the south bank. Note that though the Roman army had crossed the Danube into Slavene territory at one spot, this did not prevent the Sclavenes from crossing the river on to Roman territory at another. So the Roman army crossed back to the south bank at Palastolon (Oescus). They then marched east, by-passing Asemus, until they reached Curisca (Securisca). The soldiers had now changed their minds and were going to let themselves be ferried across to the opposite bank where there was an encampment of the barbarians.¹⁸⁶ Then the weather broke, and they changed their minds once more. Maurice again ordered them to attack the barbarians and live off their land. This command started a mutiny which culminated in the proclamation of Phocas, and soon after the deposition and murder of Maurice.

There is no doubt that since the 580s the Roman situation had improved. There had only been one major Avar thrust into the Empire, namely in 598. But the campaigning was still largely on imperial territory. The operations

184 Vasic and Kondic 1983, 542–60. According to this paper, abandonment took place in the last decade of the sixth century.

185 Theophylact 8.6.1. The Antes had agreed with Maurice to harass the Sclavenes while the latter were raiding the Roman provinces (Michael Syr. 10. 21).

186 Theophylact 8.6.7.

against the Sclavenes were punitive, not aimed at permanent pacification. A controlled frontier had not been reestablished. There was still no army permanently stationed in the frontier zone. The forts in the Iron Gate seem to have been destroyed in the 590s. No coins of either Phocas or Heraclius seem to have been found there.¹⁸⁷ The Empire was still unable to stop Slavene incursions, and probably by this stage permanent settlement was taking place. There is no evidence that provincial administration had been re-established.

I have not seen any recent survey of the state of frontier archaeology of Lower Moesia and Dacia Ripensis, or of the evidence for military occupation and administration in these provinces after 600.¹⁸⁸ I would suggest that this region had become a buffer zone, in which a certain number of cities maintained themselves more or less independently, and defended themselves independently, with the help of what had once been a Roman frontier garrison. Country life had certainly been severely disrupted by decades of raiding. The population was surely much reduced, and had retreated to fortified hill settlements. The Danube and Singidunum marked the limits of imperial influence.

In areas still under regular Roman administration the damage was very great. Excavation of the fortified settlements of the Dobrudja (Scythia Minor) has shown that a high proportion were destroyed in the years 576–93.¹⁸⁹ Some were restored but with more primitive building methods, or on a smaller scale.¹⁹⁰ But for many there is no evidence of the return of the army.¹⁹¹ It was mainly sea-coast towns like Tomis, Callatis, and Histria that kept their military function and urban appearance. Coin-finds at Histria and Noviodunum show some recovery after the nadir in the 590s and confirm that maritime settlements showed more recovery than inland settlements. But even these were very far indeed from having returned to their former condition when the disastrous invasion of 614 ended both militarization and urbanization along the lower Danube.¹⁹²

But even in 602 it was not by any means obvious that the condition of the frontier provinces could ever be fully restored. The situation remained precarious. It had been proved that the Empire could not at the same time fight

187 Popovic 1975, 445–504, relevant, 480–4. Nor have such coins been found at Iatrus. See *Iatrus-Krivina*, 66.

188 I have not seen Madgearu 1997, 3–4, 315–36.

189 For details see Madgearu 2001, 207–17.

190 At Capidava a small fort with earthen wall was built in a corner of the former fortress. At Tropaeum the precinct was rebuilt after the first destruction without fired bricks.

191 Halmyris, Opatj, Tropaeum, Ulmetum.

192 See below.

a war in the East and defend the border provinces in the Balkans, meaning particularly the territories north of the Haemus range. The maintenance of such improvement in the situation on the Danube as had been achieved by 601 depended on peace in the East. In the event, the deposition and murder of Maurice and the accession of Phocas were immediately followed first by rebellion of the *magister militum per Orientem*, and then a renewal of war by the Persians. But even if this particular sequence of events had not happened, it was likely that the Persians would have tried to exploit their growing power sooner rather than later with very similar results. So much for what might have been if Maurice had not been deposed.

What happened after 602 is more difficult to establish than what happened in the previous twenty years because we no longer have Theophylact's *History* which, for all its faults, gives us a great deal of detailed information of campaigns in the Balkans, much of which seems to have been derived from contemporary sources. The *Paschal Chronicle* and the *Chronicle* of Theophanes are much less concerned with the Balkans. It is, however, significant that they do not record any Balkan disasters in the reign of Phocas. This suggests that there was no major invasion, in spite of the fact that the imperial army was so heavily engaged in the East. Theophanes does, however, report that Phocas removed troops from Europe to the eastern front.¹⁹³ He reports that when Heraclius had won his civil war, and become emperor, he found that the Avars had devastated Europe.¹⁹⁴

In any case, even if there was no major invasion, this does not exclude the possibility that the Roman position along the Danube continued to decline, even if less dramatically. Archaeology suggests that very many of the Roman cities and forts in Scythia Minor were abandoned after 600, even if the date of the abandonment cannot be fixed precisely. Poulter¹⁹⁵ has suggested a range of dates for the abandonment of a number of these settlements. Inland settlements, for instance Tropaeum Traiani (abandoned 586–600), Ulmetum (580–600), Beroea (576–600), appear to have been abandoned somewhat earlier than those along the river, for example, Axiopolis (610–20), Capidava (600–10), Dinogetia (600–10), Noviodunum (610–20), while those along the coast, for example, Histria (615–30) and Callatis (after 630), were abandoned last of all. The dating is based principally on coin-finds, and therefore involves a considerable amount of uncertainty. In any case the coins do not tell us anything about the circumstances in which the places were abandoned, whether they

193 Theophanes AM 6096, AD 603/4.

194 Theophanes AM 6103, AD 610/11.

195 Poulter 1979, 198–201. Some dates have been modified by Madgearu 2001.

were destroyed by enemy action or evacuated, whether they were abandoned gradually one by one, or altogether at the same time.

Something dramatic happened over a wide area in the fourth or fifth year of Heraclius, that is in 613/14 or 614/15, when the Sclavenes are said to have occupied Greece.¹⁹⁶ We have a detailed account of an attack on Thessalonika by the Sclavenes, which seems to have happened some time after the great invasion, for the narrative assumes that the attack was a culmination of a widespread offensive extending over Achaea, Epirus, and the greater part of Illyricum, as well as the islands. That is why Lemerle chose 615 as a likely date for the attack.¹⁹⁷ According to the anonymous author, the Sclavenes wanted to capture Thessalonika in order to plunder it but also to install in it their families and baggage, including no doubt their plunder.¹⁹⁸ At least two years later a massive army of Sclavenes and Avars, led by the chagan himself, once more attacked Thessalonika, and besieged it for thirty-three days. He did not capture the city. But the narrative gives us some interesting information about the state of the Balkans around 617. The whole of Greece was still in the hands of the Sclavenes and being plundered by them. Thessalonika was full of refugees from the former imperial provinces of Pannonia, Dacia, and Dardania. It is significant that refugees from the cities of Naissus¹⁹⁹ and Sardica are mentioned.²⁰⁰ For these cities, to the west and south of the Haemus Mountains, situated on routes respectively through the Hebrus and Maritsa valleys, had not been troubled by the Avars or the Sclavenes in the wars of the 580s and 590s.

The so called *Notitia* of Epiphanius, more accurately the *Notitia (Ekthesis)* of Pseudo Epiphanius, provides evidence for the extent of the survival of cities later in the sixth century. This is a list of bishoprics, which was dated by Gelzer to the time of Heraclius (610–41).²⁰¹ The date is, however, problematic as the document mentions a place called Gordoserba in Bithynia which seems to be

196 *Chronicle of Isidor*, Th. Mommsen (ed.), *MGH AA XI*, Berlin 1894, 479; *Continuatio Hispana*, *ibid.*, 337, lines 13–15; *John of Nikiu*, H. Zotenberg (ed.), Paris 1883, 550.

197 Lemerle 1981, vol. 2, 91–4.

198 Lemerle 1981, vol. 1, 175, (Recueil anonyme, premier miracle, 180).

199 According to Pohl 1988, 242, the latest coin found at Naissus was a *solidus* of 613–16; at Caričin Grad a coin of 606/7; at Salona on the Adriatic coast a coin 625/30. On the capture of Salona see Pohl 1988, 243–5.

200 Lemerle 1981, vol. 1, 186 (Recueil anonyme, deuxième miracle, 200).

201 H. Gelzer (ed.), *Notitia ps-Epiphaniū* in 'Ungedruckte und ungenügend veröffentlichte Texte der *Notitiae Episcopatum*', *Abhandlungen der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, phil-hist. Kl, XXI.3, Munich 1900, 583. A Heraclian date is also supported by J. Darrouzès 1981, 7–9. The text is 204–13.

a Serb settlement first witnessed at the Council of Trullus in 692.²⁰² This would date the document to the end of the seventh century. At any rate, according to this *Notitia*, there survived as bishoprics north of Haemus along the Danube Novae,²⁰³ Transmarisca, Dorostolon (Durostorum), and Zikidiba (Sucidava).²⁰⁴ There is no mention of any city to the west of Novae. Another source tells us that the coastal cities of Tomis and Odessus still had archbishops in 678/9, when the Bulgars took over the Dobrudja.²⁰⁵ South of the Haemus in the provinces of Europe, Thrace, Haemimontus, and Rhodope, numerous cities survived.²⁰⁶

Strictly speaking this *Notitia* only witnesses the survival of bishoprics. It cannot tell us about cities that had survived in some form or other without a bishop, or perhaps even with a bishop who had lost contact with Constantinople. So while the *Notitia* of Epiphanius does not mention either Naissus or Serdica, we know that both cities survived in some shape. For Naissus kept its name, the modern Nis, and Serdica was fortified and garrisoned in AD 809,²⁰⁷ and its cathedral of saint Sophia is still standing today.

It is, however, probably significant that there is no mention of any Danubian city to the west of Novae. Moreover even Novae and the handful of Danubian cities to its east mentioned in the *Notitia* do not figure in bishops' lists of the Councils of Constantinople in 680 and 692.²⁰⁸ Continuity and transformation are not appropriate words to describe what happened in this area in late antiquity. The Roman organization was destroyed and its end marks a sharp break.

202 Ostrogorsky 1959, 47–66.

203 Although few or no coins later than Phocas have so far been found at Novae; Čičikova 1994, 127–52, relevant 152.

204 Darrouzès 1981, 213 (445–8).

205 Theophanes AM 6171.

206 For lists of cities of the provinces of Thrace, south of the Haemus, whose bishops are mentioned in the councils of the late seventh century and later see Jones 1971, 524–5. Some evidence for the fate of individual towns is found in Rumen Ivanov (ed.) 1995; see also Rumen Ivanov (ed.) 2003.

207 Theophanes AM 6301.

208 Council of AD 680: Mansi 11.209–12, 217–20, 223–24; of AD 692, 987–1006. But Leo the Deacon, writing after 992, described Durostorum (Silistra) as a city which owed its present size and beauty to Constantine (PG 117, 857). So Durostorum too seems to have survived.

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